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ABSTRACT

This document is comprised of the four issues in the second volume of a quarterly journal for parents of children in Montessori infant and toddler programs. The May 1998 issue contains an article on Treasure Baskets which are designed for non-mobile babies who can sit up, an article discussing the personal growth of a Montessori teacher who became a mother, and a picture story of a day in a Montessori toddler class. The August 1998 issue covers language development for infants and toddlers, baby body awareness taught through games, and appropriate books for toddlers. The November 1998 issue includes an article on observing children from birth to three, a picture story of a day in a Montessori toddler class, and an article discussing infant crawling. The February 1999 issue presents information on toddlers and their transitions, fostering hope in children, and Maria Montessori's rules for the treatment of the child. A regular feature of the journal is "Ask Ginny," an advice column. (JS)

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Infants and Toddlers

VOLUME 2, NUMBER 1

MAY 1998

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Infants and Toddlers

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Maria Montessori observed that the greatest social challenge was the establishment of the right relationship between the child and the adult. Most adults have been exposed as children to a culture which did not understand or nurture the true spirit of the child.

Without understanding the true needs of children, these adults, in turn, transmit the attitudes and practices ingrained in them by their experience. And so it goes, each new generation of adults reinforces the unenlightened culture of the past generations.

The article, Personal Growth by Martha Werner, in this issue is a fresh breath of air. The author reveals to us her efforts to know, understand and accept herself. She is conscious of her own personal inconsistencies and her struggles to achieve peace with herself.

We can identify with her struggle, because, through her insight, we see ourselves as well. We join her in our own struggles to reach a new level of understanding of ourselves and a new level of experiencing humanness, as we strive to learn more about the true nature of the children before us. We are freed, as we serve the young child, to see all life anew.

by Lillian DeVault Kroenke

Letters to the Editor

A Mothers Story in the November 1997 issue could change our world if every parent could practice the observational skills the author describes.

Your picture story in the same issue was truly a description of respect for the child's rights.

Barbara Reed
South Bend, IN

Thank you for your help and for creating a place where we can all come together and grow.
Janet D Dostal
Seattle, WA 98115

by Ginny Varga

How can I help parents understand that for Montessori to be effective it has to be practiced in the home?

Gayle Davis
Fernandina Beach, Florida

This is a difficult question because we do not have control over other peoples understanding. Sometimes the best approach is to ask questions rather than to give information. For instance, you might want to ask:

1. What are your child's basic needs and how are they being met?
2. What kind of person would you like your child to become?
3. How do you think a Montessori school or class can help meet your child's basic needs?
4. How do you think a Montessori experience will help your child become the kind of person you envision?
5. Do you think our working together would help to achieve these goals? If so, how?

You could follow-up the questions with a meeting in which you would give feedback to the parents and/or use the questions for discussion. This format and process may help to enhance communication and understanding.

For future issues, please direct your questions to:

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The Treasure Basket

By Virginia Varga

The Treasure Basket overflowing with interesting objects provides infants who can sit up—but who are not yet mobile—with valuable early experiences of their home or child care environment They can look at, grasp, shake, taste or bang the objects that are carefully selected for safety and attractiveness.

Common household items, such as measuring spoons, sponges, brushes, small pans, and cloth napkins may be included to provide a variety of textures and materials. In this way, the kitchen closet comes to the child before he or she can crawl to it.

The Treasure Basket concept was introduced to the Infant Program at the Center for Montessori Teacher Education in New York (CMTE/NY) in 1995 by Grazia Honegger. Grazia showed a video tape of Elinor Goldschmied, who works as a consultant to child care centers in the United Kingdom, Italy and Spain, presenting the Treasure Basket to a group of mothers and their babies in Europe.

The first reaction to the video of children exploring the Treasure Basket was that it would never be accepted in America. The objects in the basket looked too dangerous and would be difficult to sanitize.

Some of the household items had long handles and some could potentially cause injury. With careful planning and supervision by an adult, however, the Treasure Basket provides safe and pleasant exploration for non-mobile infants.

The Treasure Basket should be large—12 to 15 inches in diameter—filled with household items chosen to offer a variety of sensory experiences. The richness of these sensory experiences of sight, taste, touch and sound serve as food for the infant's developing brain. By exploring the familiar contents of the basket, the infant begins to make sense of the world.

Remember, the Treasure Basket and its contents are designed for non-mobile babies who can sit

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Some of the objects I use in the basket include:

Wood:
napkin rings
honey dipper
egg cup
short, thick dowel
short handle spoons of different size

Straw:
tightly woven coaster

Brushes:
hair brush
short handled paint brush

Metal:
pot
pan
bell
boxes
strainer
small lid
demitasse spoon
measuring spoons on ring

Rubber:
ball
soap drainer

Sponge:
luffa
real sponge

Glass:
shot glass

Natural Objects:
rocks
orange
lime

Cloth:
cloth napkins

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THE TREASURE BASKET

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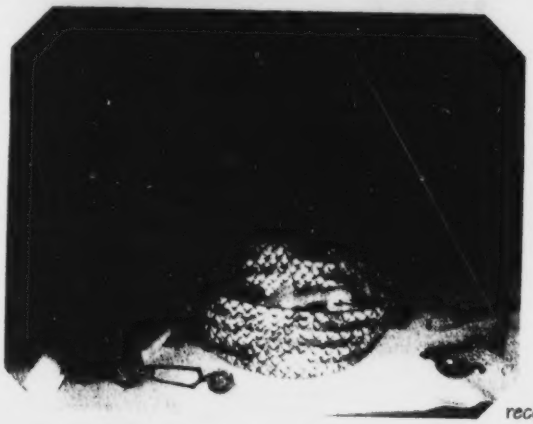
comfortably. The contents should be safe for them to handle and mouth. The same objects are not safe for mobile babies who can lift, poke and throw objects. The Treasure Basket offers the non-mobile infant the opportunity to look, to make choices, to reach, grasp, taste, feel, shake and bang objects of different shapes and textures.

Periodically, some items in the Treasure Basket should be changed and new items added. An adult should always observe the infant using the basket and intervene, if necessary, to provide protection. The adult should not suggest, advise or praise the infant while the child is exploring and concentrating on the basket's contents.

When there is a mix of mobile and non-mobile babies, the Treasure Basket should be kept in a closet and only brought out for one or two non-mobile sitting infants at appropriate times of the day.



A valuable resource on this topic is the book, *People Under Three*, by Elinor Goldschmeid and Sonia Jackson. Goldschmeid writes, "This period of being able to sit up comfortably brings a new, small piece of autonomy to a baby, but also brings new vexations." She observed that infants seem to be ready for things to happen, yet cannot move to get involved and to explore. They often seem bored. Based upon these observations and the fact that infants are hungry for sensory stimulation, the Treasure Basket helps the infant to satisfy this need and supports their growing curiosity about the world.

Ginny Varga... is widely recognized as one of the leaders in the field of Infant and Toddler education. She founded one of the first Montessori programs in the country at the Gloria Dei School, Dayton, OH following her AMI/AMS preprimary training in 1961.

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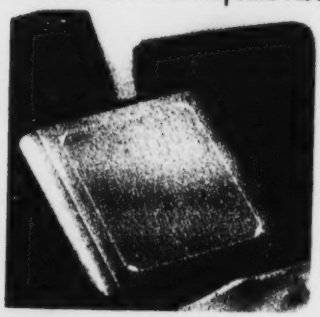

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Personal Growth By Martha Werner

For years I thought personal growth came with age— that I would one day notice that all the troublesome tendencies I once had were gone. I waited for my tendency to procrastinate to disappear, to outgrow my condescending attitude, to wake up organized and to become a whole person. I no longer believe that personal growth comes easily and automatically with age. Instead, it is the product of experience, decision making and being responsible.

Growth cannot occur when we avoid life experiences, refuse to make decisions and persist in irresponsibility. So, it is not surprising that I did not grow much in my first years as a traditional teacher. I avoided negative experiences by switching schools quickly. I did not make a firm decision to be a teacher, keeping anxiety and doubt as barriers to commitment. Consequently, I would not—because I felt I could not—finish my certification. Those early years were years in limbo, as I waited for what I really wanted—children of my own. Everything else was a means to this end.

Now, I am a mother of a wonderful 18 month old, my daughter Naomi Marie. I will not be able to avoid the life experiences she will provide for me. I have made many decisions with long term consequences because of her. I am responsible for her care and upbringing. My love for her will not allow me to shirk them.

My daughter is the catalyst for my growth. I have learned much about God, children and myself from her to help me become a better teacher. I am excited to experience how this school year will be different for me because of what I have learned and how I have grown this past year and a half.

It is humbling to be a mother. I observe myself responding imperfectly in every situation. My Montessori training has been a difficult burden to bear—always reminding me of how critical these first years are to the rest of Naomi's development.

> I did not know until I became a mother that when someone hugs your child, says sweet things and smiles, parents receive these tokens of affection as if they were directed toward them.

The energy, compassion and knowledge needed to parent well seem at times to be beyond my capacity. When I am tired and frustrated, I want to do my best, but my high expectations for myself are not fulfilled. Nonetheless, I am experiencing a strange confidence—that I will manage and Naomi will be all right.

I know that most of the things I said I would never, or could never do, I have done. I may not have given my daughter a pacifier, but I have given her suckers in the car. I have yelled at her, let her walk around the house with food, and spoken to her in baby talk. I was austere as a teacher, believing anything less than the most deliberate, serious care was child abuse.

Other traditional teachers and I would often sit and condemn parents for their slight oversights. But now, I think that God chooses to give first born children to their parents when they have the least experience and knowledge, but the most time and energy to figure it out. Young parents deserve as much compassion and gentle handling as young children.

Looking back, I think I may have wounded parents in my previous experience teaching. I did not know until I became a mother that when someone hugs your child, says sweet things and smiles, parents receive these tokens of affection as if they were directed toward them. The slightest negativity is devastating.

Parents see their children as I see my daughter. She is the most precious gift that God has ever entrusted to me. She holds my hope for the future and my determination in the present. When I spoke to the parents in my classroom about their children, I would often tell them that their children were normal and/or average. I would see their eyes fall and not know why. I thought I had reassured them that nothing was wrong, but they were waiting for so much more.

I was offended when someone said that teachers should be parents before going into the classroom. I see the wisdom in that now. A teacher as a parent will know that she is not perfect, that an upset child does not mean that the school environment has failed, and that new parents have fragile egos. She needs to have her patience tested so that she may endure without anger or despair. Finally, the teacher needs to see each child with the eyes of wonder and love with which she saw her own child.

Being a parent gives a teacher a point of reference. I can remind myself of how far my daughter has come in her few months of life. She has been able to run for only a month, is just starting to use a spoon with some skill and beginning to lead us by the hand and point to communicate. I was constantly frustrated with younger toddlers in our classroom, because I did not appreciate how far they had come,

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One Fine Morning...

a picture story

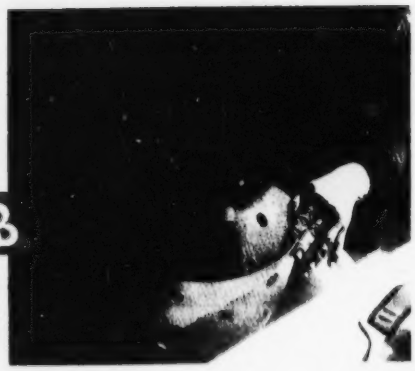
by Lillian DeVault Kroenke

A

We use a funnel to fill the bottle.

We track the balls down the slide. C

It is



B

We push objects through the holes.

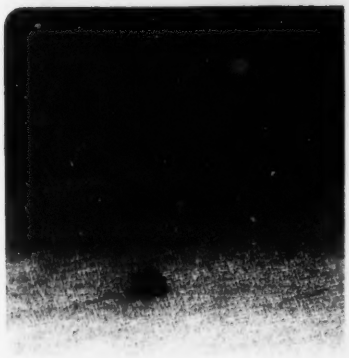
D

We pound the pegs into the board.

We watch the hermit crabs. F

E

We spray the window and clean it.



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Photographs by Lillian DeVault Kroenke were taken of Lynn Williams' toddler class at The Boulder Montessori School Toddler Program in Boulder, Colorado.

ne for a tea party.

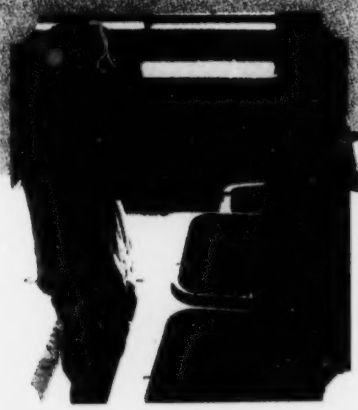
H

I

We set the table with a cup and a saucer.

J

Then we pour the tea into the cup.



K

When we are finished, we rinse out our cups.

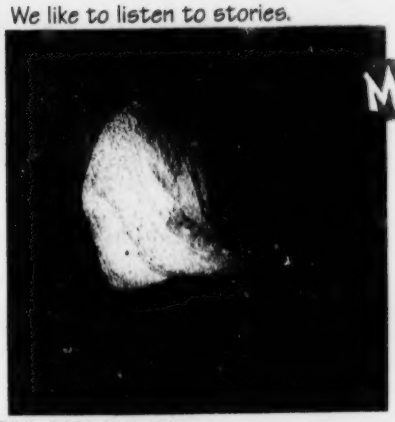
G

Thomas and Henry, the hermit crabs, run when we sing to them.

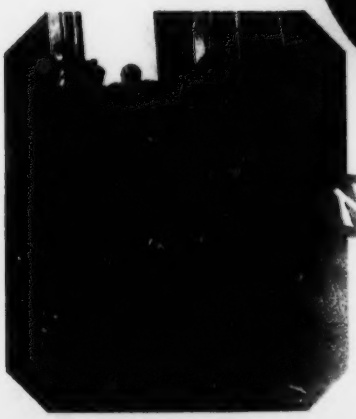
L

We swing in this chair swing.

We like to listen to stories.



M



N

We like to slide down the slide.

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One Fine Morning

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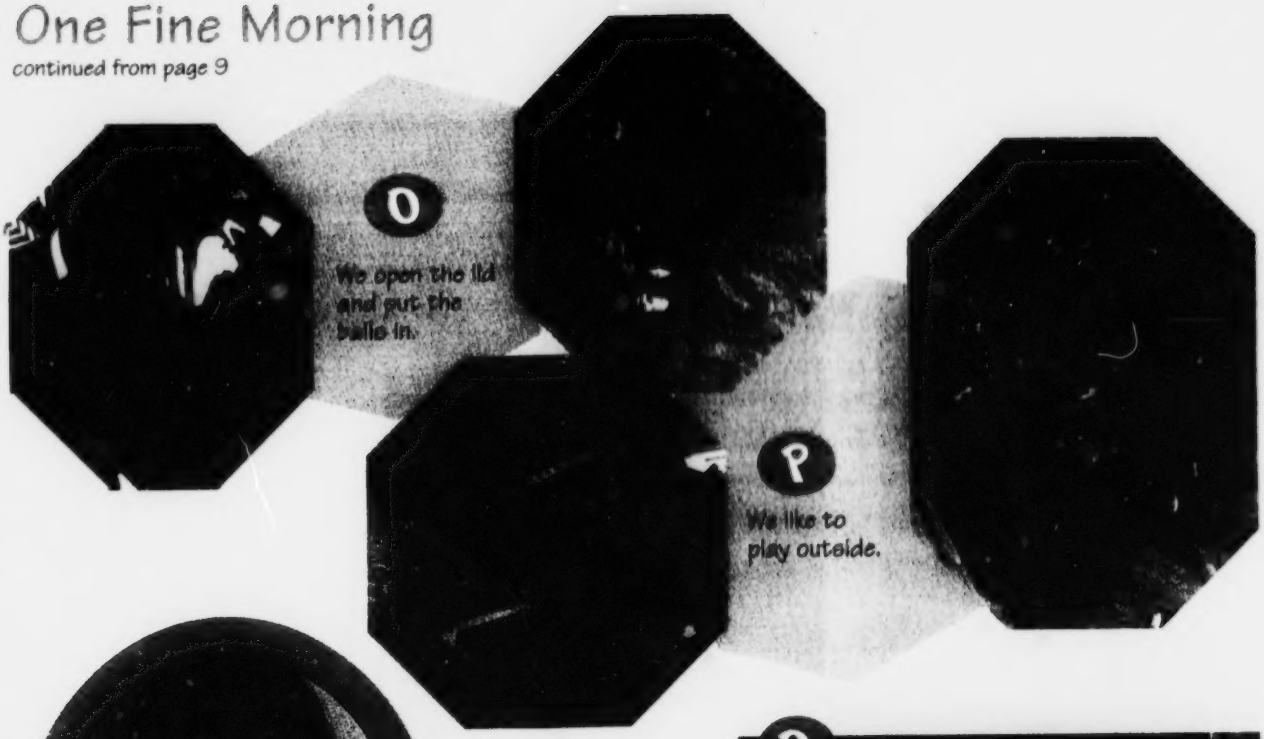
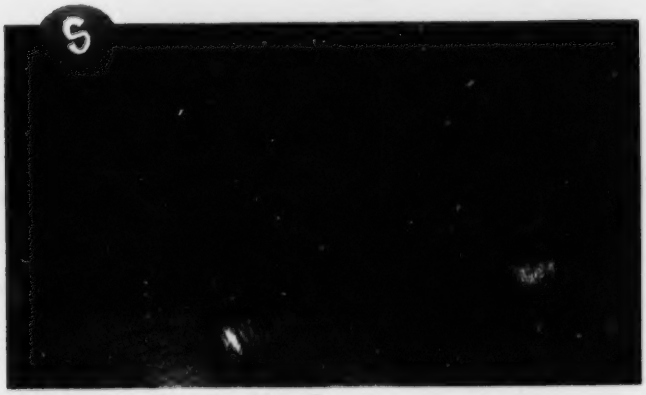


Our teacher is Lynn Williams.

We sing Hush Little Baby...

We sing the pounding song.



We sing Row, Row, Row Your Boat.
We find a partner and row.

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Reviewed by Sue Kennedy

Book Review

The Growth of the Mind and the Endangered Origins of Intelligence. Stanley I. Greenspan, M.D., with Beryl Lieff Benderly. 1997 (Addison-Wesley)Publishing Company, Inc., New York, NY) 317 pages. ISBN n-201-48302-5 $25.

Imagine being in a space ship. Our visual perception and sense of balance are distorted. We are in a very strange world. How do we react to liquid that does not stay in an open container or to touching a stable object and finding ourselves flying off into space sometimes upside down or backwards?

Now think about the newborn child. While not completely dark or quiet or weightless, the womb does provide some protection from sensations of the outside world. At birth the newborn is bombarded by multitudes of sensations, only a very few of which may have been similarly experienced before birth. How and where do infants begin to make any sense of this world? How do they begin to sort out and organize their – sensations to learn who they are, what they are, where they are and why they are?

In his introduction to The Growth of the Mind and the Endangered Origins of Intelligence, Stanley Greenspan states, "In fact, emotions, not cognitive stimulation, serve as the mind's primary architect." It is the quality of emotional interactions with the truly significant people in the child's life and the cognitive stimulation that these interactions provide that will determine the answers to the newborns questions of who I am, what I am, where I am, and why I am.

Greenspan first explores the dichotomy that has long existed between the cognitive and emotional aspects of our minds. He identifies six critical tasks or stages that must be successfully met during the first four years of life in order for children to make best use of their minds as they grow and develop. How a human being gets from that first helpless moment of life to knowledge about how to solve the greater problems of society starts with the first extremely critical years.

The last half of the book presents mounting evidence that such growth and development are "becoming seriously endangered by modern institutions and social patterns," such as methods of childcare both at home and in childcare centers, changes in family living patterns at all economic levels and changes in our educational systems. Together, these factors put optimal development at great risk.

Science now tells us that the brain is not complete at birth. Even though the newborn possesses most, if not all, of the brain cells that will be needed throughout life, the connections between those cells are not developed.

Without these connections, brain cells cannot tell my finger that it is close to a flame, tell my heart that someone loves me or tell my mind that the checkbook didn't balance and how I should react. The responses of people in the infant's world (i.e., how they structure their reactions and the environment) allow the infant to begin to regulate and organize all the seemingly incomprehensible sensations that make up the world and allow the brain to start making connections among the billions of brain cells that are present at birth.

Making connections is what the whole process of growth is all about. Greenspan says that it is the emotional connections relating to the physical and mental development of the brain, the emotional connections relating to the attachment process with significant people and the emotional connections relating to healthy growth of the emotional self that determine optimal development of the healthy self.

The first four stages of development fall within the first 18 month of life. The first stage is self-regulation in which the infant begins to make order of all the sensations coming into the system and begins to develop some trust in people and things in the environment.

The second stage is falling in love with the world in which the infant forms a strong positive bond with a caring and loving adult. This gives the infant freedom to expand his borders, to know and experience more and more.

> The ability to abstract a feeling and give it a name...allows the child to bring emotions to a new level of awareness and to express them symbolically rather than by acting on them physically.

The third stage is the beginning of intentional behavior, the willful reaching out and interacting with people in her world. A child can take Daddy's hand and lead him to the refrigerator when she feels thirsty, or the child can be upset when she doesn't get to go outside. Now the child can begin to connect sensation and emotion to intentional action.

The fourth stage begins when the child starts to develop purpose and higher levels of interaction including more complex presymbolic communication. Development of what Greenspan calls the "pre-verbal sense of self" is very dramatic between the ages of 12 and 18 months. Concerning the first 18

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BOOK REVIEWS

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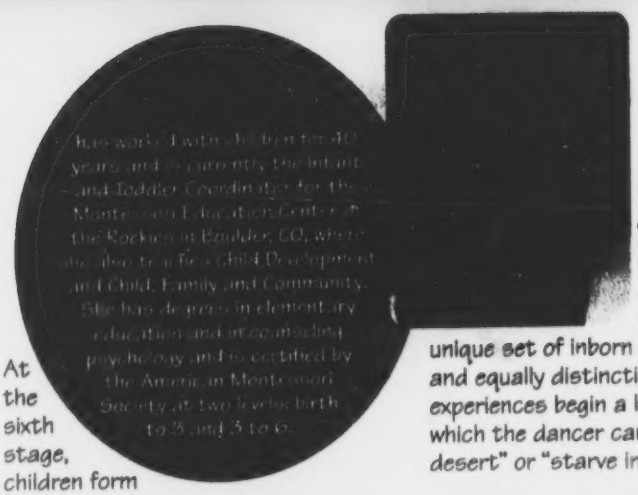
month of growth, Greenspan says, "Values and attitudes begin here, well before they are represented by symbols."

Stage five is the beginning of images, ideas, and symbols. The ability to abstract a feeling and give it a name—to understand that the tightness in the chest is fear, the desire to throw a punch is anger or a lift of the heart is joy—allows the child to bring emotions to a new level of awareness and to express them symbolically rather than by acting on them physically. He can tell Dad he feels scared rather than shrieking in fear. He can tell Mom he wants a cookie rather than dragging her to the kitchen. Like other stages, this stage must have a positive and responsive person with whom the child can interact, find limits, and test reality. This back-and-forth communication that is established by the end of the second year becomes communication for communication's sake, rather than communication merely to meet a need.

Now the child can begin to reflect and think about needs and desires and what they mean—as well as how they can be fulfilled and understood. "With the ability to create ideas, the child has arrived at the threshold of awareness and consciousness." Now we have the symbolic self. Greenspan continues, "He begin to experience himself in part as adults do, in inner images of himself... The child can sense through these images how he operates, how he feels, what he wants. The sum of images in the mind's eye constitutes what people commonly mean by a sense of self.

Now the child can begin to reflect and think about needs and desires and what they mean—as well as how they can be fulfilled and understood. "With the ability to create ideas, the child has arrived at the threshold of awareness and consciousness."



At the sixth stage, children form bridges among their own ideas and between their own thoughts and those of others. This leads to construction of a cohesive internal world. Time becomes comprehensible, space becomes orderly, and fantasy and reality become categorized. The child begins to construct the all-important ego functions of reality testing, impulse control, and concentration—all of which form the bedrock of mental health and cognitive achievement.

Somewhere in the third or fourth year, if all goes well, these six levels that make up the foundation for life should be solidly in place. There remain many more levels to development in the years to come because we are all "works in progress." Such development will depend upon that early foundation which derived its strength from the quality of emotional interactions during our earliest days, weeks and months. Greenspan explains, "(At) the source of our humanity—its creations and accomplishments as well as its imperfections—are our emotions, desires and the relationships in which they are refined."

Greenspan next discusses consciousness, the roots of morality, a new view of intelligence and how to fit nurture to nature. He identifies the "dance of development" and "patterns of reactions," describing how each child's unique set of inborn characteristics and equally distinctive sequence of experiences begin a lifelong dance in which the dancer can "flourish in the desert" or "starve in the garden."

The second part of the book discusses the "endangered origins of intelligence" or trends in our world that may doom us as a viable or even existing part of our planet. Although this is not a detailed discussion, Greenspan raises points that must be resolved. He concludes with a chapter entitled, Our Human Imperative. He begins his strongly worded warning by saying, "The assumption that there will be enough reflective adults to maintain a free society is not to be taken for granted."

Dr. Greenspan's findings have come about in large measure because of his work with children at extreme biological risk, children who are developing relatively normally and children from multi-risk or multi-problem families. He has tried to determine how children's failure to develop cognitive and social skills matches their family's failure to meet their emotional needs at each stage of growth. I recommend reading—and rereading—the first part of this book by every parent, grandparent, aunt, uncle, childcare provider and administrator, educator, doctor, nurse and government official who has anything remotely to do with children and their welfare. In short, I believe this book should be required reading for anyone who cares what the next century will bring in terms of quality of life for our planet.

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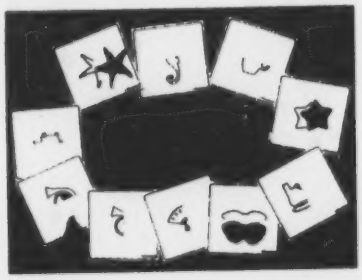

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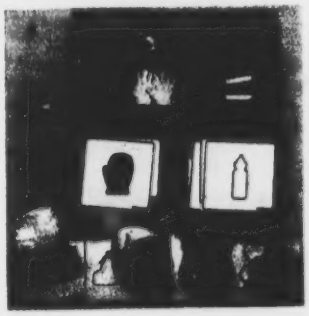

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PERSONAL GROWTH

continued from page 7

only how far they needed to go. I did not see how walking though the classroom door, saying "bye", "mine" and "no" were in themselves signs of the colossal strides they had already taken.

I was impatient with the children's progress. I did not invite the children as much as force them to be what I had heard they were supposed to be. As with a child's sense of order, progress is a natural process not to be forced upon the child by a teacher. Naomi's sense of order sometimes compels her to put objects away where she has found them and helps her to communicate —she has brought me a bowl when she was hungry. Other times, the sense of order evidences itself in her frustrated crying and banging as she tries to manipulate objects into some preconceived pattern.

It does not mean that if the vacuum is upstairs instead of in the closet, she will cry or if we do not follow the strictest pattern of events for each day that the world will be a confusing jumble to her. Naomi knows that keys go in locks, doors open and shut, clothes go in baskets, phones ring and babies are to be held on shoulders and patted. These observations were hers and did not depend on the environment that I consciously organized for her.

Maria Montessori noted, with reverence, this kind of learning and development in children. She observed their natural tendency to work with concentration and identified sensitive periods of intense interest. We read her work as a textbook instead of an inspirational message. We have tried to recreate with our minds what she saw with her heart. We observe the letter of the law and not the spirit.

Thank God that children are tenacious in their spiritual and intellectual life. They usually cannot be hindered enough to completely prevent their natural development.

> I was constantly frustrated with younger toddlers in our classroom, because I did not appreciate how far they had come, only how far they needed to go.

However, we should not delude ourselves that we have freed children to develop naturally. Children can free themselves from us as long as there is some part of the day during which they are free to choose their own activity. Then they will seek to accomplish their process of development.

As teachers, I believe we have become too caught up in the demands of the parents and the demands of the state to allow children an unhurried, self-disciplined experience in their early years. Thanks to this wonderful year and a half of observing my daughter in some moments of self-guided exploration, I am resolved to give children the space and time they need while they are in my care. I will cherish every moment of their extraordinary development and share with parents the miracle that is their child.

Martha Werner is currently an intern in the CMTE/NY Infant and Toddler Program, Michigan

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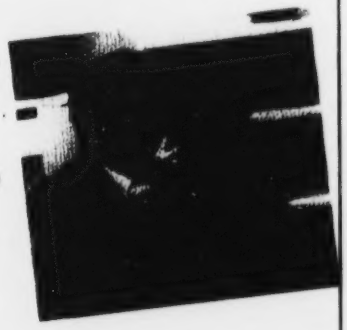

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Vol. 2, No. 2

Infants and Toddlers

Infants and Toddlers

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Editorial

Bulk Mail Update

I have been encouraged by the increase in interest in bulk mail subscriptions to *Infants and Toddlers*.

Almost anywhere we go, we observe parents with young children. Most of them, like us years ago, are virtually unaware of their child's marvelous capabilities, of the mysterious forces working within each child.

This is an age when society is beginning to awaken to the needs of infants in the earliest stages of their lives, when they are virtually dependent on the knowledge, good will and loving care of adults. As a group, we Montessorians are tuned in to the experience of childhood. We have much to give, much to share and much more to learn.

Infants and Toddlers is intended to be an agent of educational change, focusing on the very youngest children and their needs.

Several of the schools that subscribe to *Infants and Toddlers* report that they use the journal to inform their staff and their parents. They also give the quarterly journal to prospective parents as part of their enrollment procedures. Infant and toddler teacher education programs give copies to their new interns as well as prospective students.

Isn't it time for you to try bulk subscriptions for your program? Let us help you help your program.

by Lillian DeVault Kroenke

As a charter member of the Infants and Toddlers quarterly publication. I look forward to receiving each issue as it comes out. I am delighted that the people fundamental in the birth-to-three Montessori community are pooling their knowledge and experience to share with others as we work to serve the needs of children in our care. I certainly thank you for launching this important contribution to our ongoing work in this field.

Marti Bondelid
Philadelphia, PA

Ask Ginny...

by Ginny Varga

Q I notice that some toddlers use their whole hand to pick up puzzle pieces. Should we put knobs on every puzzle?

A We are told that everything should have knobs. Many young toddlers still need to use the whole hand so sometimes the large knobs get in the way. Knobs, however, do help children develop the prehensile hand grip. Montessori claimed that the hand is the instrument of the intelligence. The opposable thumb and fingers build neurological pathways that send information to the brain.

Q What kind of puzzles do you recommend?

A There are many lovely puzzles and a tremendous variety of puzzles available. Puzzles are great for the development of visual perception, for language and also for thinking. Some children, if they haven't had much experience, need to be taught a strategy. If you just look at the shape, how do you figure out what goes together? What do you look for? What line or color goes together?

In most toddler programs, the puzzles are too simple, like a one-piece puzzle with the big knob in the center. Often the same simple puzzles placed in the room at the beginning of year are still there at the end of the year. If a puzzle is too simple or too small—ones you might put in the 3 to 6 class, there's not much interest.

I have found that we can put out difficult puzzles, like a jigsaw puzzle with a limited number pieces. Initially it's taken off the shelf a lot and it goes back to the shelf uncompleted because they can't do it.

But, if you leave it out, soon the children start figuring it out. They began to see the pattern. Other very simple puzzles that seem appropriate for toddlers sit there and gather dust. Toddlers like challenging activities.

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Language Development for Infants and Toddlers

By Virginia Varga

One question I still find difficult is "What is Montessori?" I never know how much information to give. Sometimes I ask, "Do you want the one minute, five minute, fifteen minute or one hour explanation?"

Another question I find difficult and time consuming to answer is the question, "How do you teach children to read?" It would be simpler if the question was, "How do Montessori children learn to read?"

The Experiential Foundation for Language

Let's take a look at the many everyday experiences in infant and toddler life that lay the foundation for developing all aspects of language during this special sensitive period, including the ability to read. Never minimize the importance of the infant's very first experiences of having a need and communicating that need in the infant's own language—crying and body movement.

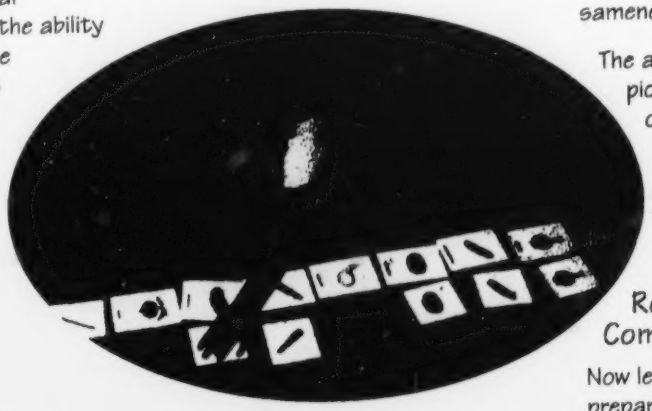
The Importance of Early Infant Communication

Early infant communication and appropriate adult responses become the basis for healthy normal psychological development. Children become self-confident that they can communicate effectively. Today we know that babies even cry in the womb. They can see. They can hear. Infants are born with the ability to communicate.

Tracking

First, the infant follows the movement of the mother's face, then possibly watches the movement of the leaves on the tree as a gentle wind passes through. Visually following moving objects helps the infant develop the ability which we call tracking. This important skill contributes to the ability of the eyes to move smoothly across the page.

Never minimize the importance of the infant's very first experiences of having a need and communicating that need in the infant's own language—crying and body movement.



Movement is Essential

It is also important for infants to have the maximum possibility of movement. Children should be free to crawl and creep about as much as possible. Children should not be put in walkers or restricted in their movement. Crawling and creeping help the development of the central nervous system as well as the coordination of the two eyes necessary for good visual development.

A ball of string hanging within reach so the child can bat or swipe at the swinging ball not only helps the eye-hand coordination, but also strengthens depth perception as well.

Sameness and Differences

I recently observed an infant of approximately thirteen months looking at a basket containing photographs of the children in the class. She picked out one of the photos and spontaneously walked across the room and tried to give it to the six-month-old infant. She obviously had the ability to see sameness and differences.

The ability to match objects and pictures is necessary to classify objects in the environment and to learn to read. Classification skills are basic to the development of intelligence.

Respectful Communication

Now let's look at the indirect preparations for verbal communication. Infants and toddlers should be spoken to frequently and respectfully. Always acknowledge the child by name. Then wait until the child turns to look at you before you proceed. For example, "I'm going to change your diaper now." Wait for a response. Then continue, "Are you ready?"

continued to page 6

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LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

continued from page 5

Speak slowly and softly so the child has time to see your facial expressions and to watch the movement of your mouth as you formulate words and sentences. Always be pleasant and positive. The child will have this time to listen attentively, another essential element that contributes to effective communication and social relationships.

Communication Rhythms

A give and take rhythm develops when two people communicate. One person speaks; the other listens. Then the listener has a turn to speak. We can experience taking turns when we are interacting with infants. The infant leads by cooing or babbling. The adult listens attentively. When the infant stops and looks at us, we can respond by imitating the baby's sounds.

Watch for Clues

Infants delight in the game. Sometimes, however, they can become overstimulated. Be observant of the infant's non-verbal gestures that reveal clues of engagement and disengagement.

Throughout this sensitive period for language, it is important for the child to hear correct language spoken. The child is absorbing the language of his culture in a very holistic way.

Reading to Children

We know that it's also important to read to children at any age. We can read stories and poetry. Be selective. Choose books with realistic pictures that help the child learn the names of everything.

The Naming Game

They love to play this naming game. First, point to a picture and say the name. After you have pointed to several pictures, ask the child to point to a picture that you name. "Point to the ball." "Show me the ball." If the child speaks, and you feel there is a chance for successful response, ask the child, "What is this?" as you hold up an object.

As a result of playing the naming game (the three-period lesson), children learn to look closely, to concentrate and to remember what they have heard. Learning the names of many sets of pictures and objects increases vocabulary. A broad vocabulary enables them to better understand what they read later on.

continued on page 12

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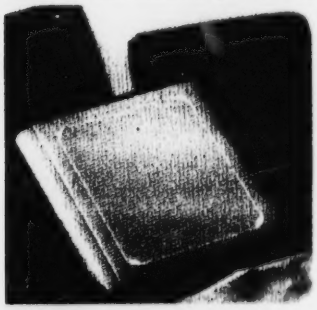

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Baby's Body Language By Ginny Varga

Babies do not sense that they have boundaries. That's why it's so easy for them to attach and bond with someone else. They can become one. They don't have a sense of their body. Their proprioceptive system doesn't send information to the brain that this is my arm, for example. It takes some time before they realize that the hand out there that they're playing with belongs to them.

We can help establish body awareness by playing games on the baby's body. Grazia Honegger, who comes to CMTE/NY periodically from Italy, introduced this activity a few years ago. We broke the trainees into groups. One group was instructed to think of songs or rhymes to play on the baby's face. Another group was told to think of songs or rhymes to play on the infant's body.

How many of you know some rhymes or songs that can be done on a baby's body? It would be good to have a collection.

Today there are some books with games like *This Little Piggy Went To Market*. As we play these games and tickle the infant's body, we send sensorial feedback to the child, helping to identify boundaries.

Years ago, parents passed on such games in an oral tradition. They didn't know what we know today about neurological development. These games are wonderful for the development of the baby's body concept.

When my younger sister was born, I was eight. I remember what my mother did for her. If you were three when your younger brother or sister was born, you probably do not remember the things your parents did. You have to be old enough to remember.

My mother said, "Bore a hole. Bore a hole. Bore a hole." with her finger twirling down toward my sister's body. My sister never quite knew when her finger was coming down. She laughed and giggled. There was the expectation that something was going to happen but she never knew where or when.

And there was another finger game:

Knock, knock,	(on the forehead)
Peek in.	(make rings around your eyes with your thumb and first finger)
Pull up the latch.	(pinch upward gently on the nose)
Walk in.	(pretend your fingers are going into the mouth)

The repetition of these little games that we play with the baby creates anticipation and playfulness. It's great for language. It's fun. Along with the seriousness and the importance of our job caring for infants, we also have to have some time to play—some fun time. And, these can be language times. It certainly is good for infant development.

We have started our collection on pages 8 and 9. If you know songs or rhymes that have worked well for you, send them to us at: Infants and Toddler, PO Box 14627, Albuquerque, NM 87191-4627. Each contribution printed will earn you one free additional issue of *Infants and Toddlers* which contains your contribution. All contributions become the property of *Infants and Toddlers* and will not be returned.

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Building Baby's Body

RHYMES

The following are among those submitted by Edda Sevilla, Potomac, MD

I'm Gonna Get Your Nose

I'm gonna get your nose,
Yes sir, yes siree.

I'm gonna get your nose,
Yes sir, yes siree.

(Each time you say nose,
kiss the baby's nose.)

I'm gonna get your toes,
Yes sir, yes siree.

I'm gonna get your toes,
Yes sir, yes siree.

(Each time you say toes,
kiss the baby's toes.)

I'm gonna get your tummy...

(Repeat rhyme with other body parts.)

This Is My Right Hand

This is my right hand.
I raise it up high.
This is my left hand,
I reach to the sky.

Right hand, left hand,
Roll them round and round.
Right hand, left hand,
Pound, pound, pound.

(Take the baby's hand and
move them accordingly.)

Thumbs

Little thumbs are up and
Little thumbs are down.
Little thumbs are dancing
Round and round and round.
(Make circles with both hands)

Dance them on your shoulder.
Dance them on your head.
Dance them on your knees
And tuck them into bed.
(Under the knees)

Submitted by Teddy Wilson

Me

10 little fingers,
10 little toes,
2 little eyes and
1 little nose.

2 little cheeks,
1 little chin, and
1 little mouth
Where the candy goes in!

(Touch the baby's body parts
as you say the rhyme.)

Baby's Eyes

Where are the baby's eyes?
Here are the baby's eyes.
(Touch the baby's eyes.)
Pretty eyes, pretty eyes,
I love you.

Where's the baby's nose?
Here's the baby's nose.
(Touch the baby's nose.)
Pretty nose, pretty nose,
I love you.

Where's the baby's cheek?
Here's the baby's cheek.
(Touch the baby's cheek.)
Pretty cheek, pretty cheek,
I love you.

Creepy Mouse

Creepy mouse
(Fingers crawl up the arm)
Creepy mouse
(Fingers crawl up to the mouth
Open up your mouth
Don't let me in.
(Tickle the chin)

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Concepts

SONGS

Head and Shoulders

Sung to: Frere Jacques

Head and shoulders, head and shoulders,
Knees and toes, knees and toes.

Head and shoulders, head and shoulders,
Knees and toes, knees and toes.

Eyes and ears, eyes and ears,
Mouth and nose, mouth and nose.

Eyes and ears, eyes and ears,
Mouth and nose, mouth and nose

Traditional

This is the Way

This is the way we wash our hands,
Wash our hands,
Wash our hands.
This is the way we wash our hands,
Every single day.
(Pretend to wash your hands.)

This is the way we wash our toes,
Wash our toes,
Wash our toes.
This is the way we wash our toes,
Every single day.
(Pretend to wash your toes.)

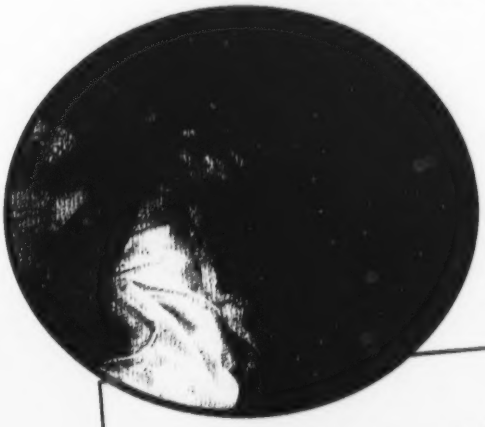
Repeat the rhyme using other body parts

Head and Shoulders

Sung to: Adieu, adieu, kind friends, adieu.

Head, shoulders, knees and toes, knees and toes.
Head, shoulders, knees and toes, knees and toes.
Eyes and ears and a mouth and a nose.
Head, shoulders, knees and toes, knees and toes.

Leslie Magliaro
Infant Center
Princeton Montessori School
487 Cherry Valley Road
Princeton, NJ 08540



Put Your Finger on Your Nose

Sung to: If You're Happy and You Know It

Put your finger on your nose, on your nose,
Put your finger on your nose, on your nose,
Put your finger on your nose and feel it as it grows,
Put your finger on your nose, on your nose,

Put your finger on your toe, on your toe,
Put your finger on your toe, on your toe,
Put your finger on your toe, and move it to and fro,
Put your finger on your toe, on your toe,

Put your finger on your ear, on your ear,
Put your finger on your ear, on your ear,
Put your finger on your ear, and see if it's still here,
Put your finger on your ear, on your ear,

Make up other verses about different body parts.

Jean Warren

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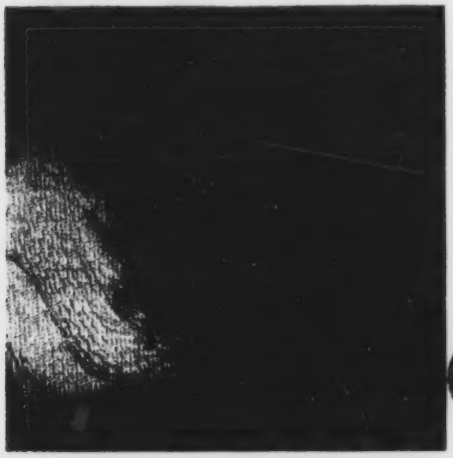
Books for Toddlers By Misha Slavick

If you have recently visited a large bookstore, you may have noticed the huge selection of children's books that are available. With all the choices, it can be hard to know what will interest your toddler. How frustrating it can be to pick out a few books for your child, then bring them home and discover your toddler has no interest in your choices

In order to ease some of this frustration, here are some suggestions to keep in mind when selecting books for toddlers.

1 The subjects of the books you select should relate to your toddler's life, or should be



something that your child shows an interest in, animals, transportation, nature, food, family and everyday routines all seem to be of universal interest to toddlers. Because toddlers are in the process of trying to make sense of the world around them, the simplest subjects are often what they turn their attention to.

2 Books for toddlers should be reality-based. Toddlers do not understand the difference between fantasy and reality Therefore, everything is real to them. Monsters, witches, ghosts, and fairy god-mothers are not part of your children's everyday life, and they are not able to understand what they are, or whether they are "real" or "make-believe". Out of respect for the young child's quest to understand reality, we avoid stories centered around fantasy.

Some books use personification as a method to tell a story. This is different than fantasy. Although it is preferable that the dialogue in a story comes from human characters, there are some good books with animals that take on the characteristics of people.

One book that uses personification that my class enjoys is "The Three Bears" by Byron Barton. The story in this book seems to interest toddlers. The three bears could easily be replaced by three people. The fact that they are bears, however, may make the story a little more appealing to the children.

3 Simple sentences, repetition, and rhyme. Books with simple sentence structure will usually hold a toddler's interest for longer periods of time. The "Tom and Pippo" series and "Machines at Work" are good examples. Books that use repetition of particular lines throughout the story are also great for toddlers. These books encourage children to read along; the words are easy for them to remember. "Brown Bear, Brown Bear" and "The Very Busy Spider" are toddler favorites that use repetitive text. Toddlers enjoy the use of rhyme in books.

Rhymes make it easy for toddlers to remember the words, enabling them to "read along". "Nuts to You" and "The Big Red Barn" are wonderful books With rhyming text. I have included a list of books that toddlers seem to enjoy. You may want to ask your child's Montessori educator if there are any books in particular that your child likes.

Another great source for children's books is the Chinaberry Book Service Catalog. The catalog gives wonderful descriptions of each book offered and categorizes books by age level. If you would like a catalog, call 1-800-776-2242.

Reading books with your child is one of the most important things you can do to enhance the development of verbal communication and intellectual growth. Through the eyes of a child, however, it is one of the most special things you can do together—something that your child will cherish throughout his or her life.

is AMS Infant-Toddler certified, and has her Bachelor of Science Degree in Education from Truman State University. Misha has worked with toddlers at Hope Montessori Infant-Toddler Community in St. Louis, Missouri for eight years.

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Toddler Book List

Tom and Pippo series
We're Going on a Bear Hunt

Machines at Work
Trucks
Building a House
Airport

Very Hungry Caterpillar
Very Busy Spider
Very Quiet Cricket
1,2,3 to the Zoo
Have You Seen my Cat?

Flying
School Bus
Truck
Freight Train

My Dog Rosie
My Cats Nick and Nora
Our New Puppy

The Snowy Day
Whistle for Willie
Peter's Chair

Nuts to You
Growing Vegetable Soup
Planting a Rainbow

Goodnight Moon
Big Red Barn

My Brown Bear Barney

When I'm Sleepy

Itsy Bitsy Spider

Brown Bear Brown Bear

Polar Bear Polar Bear
More, More, More

Sheep, Sheep, Help Me Fall Asleep
Pig, Horse Or Cow, Don't Wake Me Now

Who's Counting?
Have You Seen My Duckling?

Runaway Rabbit

Ten, Nine, Eight

Where Does it Go?

Flower Garden

Seasons
If I Were A Penguin

Where's the Baby?

Asleep Asleep

Everything Has a Place

I Love Animals

Uncle Chuck's Truck

Fingers

By Charles Uzzell

Here
In this broken piece of time
Waiting out the brief moments
Of our lifetime
We encounter each other
So by chance
That everything seems random
And thrown into blank spaces
Where we weave and spin
Brief histories
Born of a time and place –
Fragile consciousness
Loose on a planet
Seeking you.

I do not understand
Why this collection of earth
Becomes one being and
conscious.
Lonely, we are all seeking love
Stretching out,
Fingers reaching become
One moment frozen in my brain–
A gift from you to me.

(Written while watching John and Michael, infants, exploring their fingers.)

Mealtime

Mealtime is a time for a family's reunion where they can discuss topics of mutual interest. If parents prefer to watch TV rather than talk with the children, they send, with their own attitude, a nonverbal message that what is shown on the TV screen is more important than their own lives, their opinions and their feelings.

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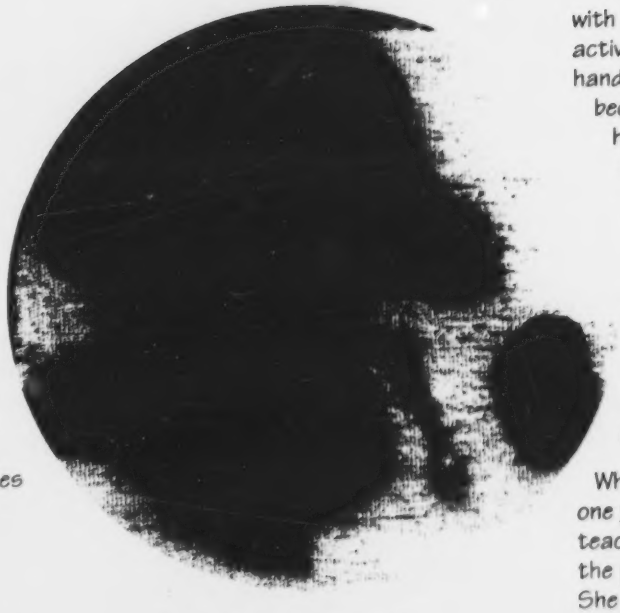
LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

continued from page 6

Building a Sense of Order

Learning the names of everything in the environment meets an immediate psychological and physiological need. Understanding that everything has a name helps to build a sense of order. This, in turn, helps the child learn to classify and to trust the environment. All this enables the child to adapt to his culture.



Reasons for Rhymes

It's important to read nursery rhymes to children. Nursery rhymes have rhymes and rhythms. I've looked at lots of books. Some illustrations are very nice and some are not. For example, I wouldn't select a book that illustrates fairy tales with scary pictures.

Songbooks are another wonderful kind of book. Songbooks also have rhythms and rhymes. You can read them just as you would read a picture book—and you can also sing the story.

I recently visited a toddler program where the intern did a wonderful job. She began by singing to the children and when the children came, she read the song from the songbook. The children were so attentive. They love music and singing. I thought this was an excellent approach to language development through music.

Put books in the classroom with pictures of the children doing different activities that the children can look at any time. In some schools, teachers make a book for each child that goes home on weekends so the parents can add to the book.

Experimenting with Letter Sounds

Once a young boy brought me a set of pictures that I had worked with so many times. I laid them out and because I was bored, I said out of the blue, "Can you give me the picture that sounds like **b** (letter sound)?" He handed me the bear. "Can you give me the picture that sounds like **t** (letter sound)?" He handed me the tiger.

For me it was a Eureka! experience. I had discovered what comes before sandpaper letters. I was so excited because, in my training program, no one had ever told me to do that. It was my own discovery and it came out of my boredom with the cards. I love boredom because out of boredom comes creativity. I never worry about anyone saying that they are bored because they will find their way out of boredom.

Indirect Absorption

Asking for pictures or objects is a wonderful auditory experience. You don't even have to say, "This begins with b." If they have repeated the activity a number of times, they can hand you those pictures and this becomes a new game. This happens only when they are very familiar with the materials, when they know all the names of the objects. You can also ask, for example, for animals by their beginning sound. Toddlers can put the letter with the animal, the **e** with the elephant and so on. This is not beyond a toddler's capability.

While this wasn't official research, one year I asked our toddler teacher, "Would you mind asking for the picture by its beginning sound. She did. When those children entered the 3 to 6 class, their new teacher told us, "I don't know what it is but these children really like the movable alphabet. They keep getting it out!"

Sound Games

We use many sets of picture cards. When a child has repeated them many times and knows the names very well, I ask the toddler, "Can you give me the picture that sounds like _____?" Name the beginning sound of the name of the object pictured, i.e. **s** (letter sound). This auditory game focuses the child's attention on the sounds which comprise words. Often toddlers play this game without the teacher's help.

Matching Alphabet Letters

Next we could have a matching letter activity. Always use lower case letters. Give the children the correct sound of the letter rather than the name of the letter. Some toddlers love to associate the letter sound with the letter. Others may not show any interest. Always

continued on page 14

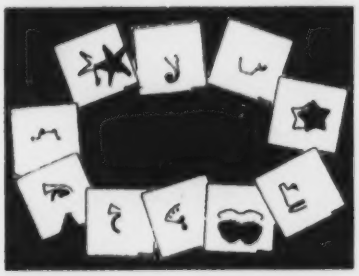
Time-Tested Toddler Tasks

HAMMERING TEES IN A TRAY
An excellent first hammering activity. Hammering into clay is satisfying for the child and quiet as well. $30.25

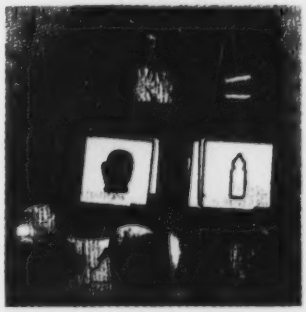
RINGS AND POSTS
A favorite toddler activity. Place the rings on either the horizontal or the vertical post. $19.75

WILD ANIMALS
Children love zoo animals. Use these replicas for nomenclature, listening to sounds, matching to pictures, as a variation for the mystery bag and more. Choose individual animals to make your own set or choose the entire collection.

Wild Animals		Middle Row:	
Individual Animals		Black Bear	5.25
Top Row:		Lion	5.25
Elephant	6.95	Tiger	5.25
Giraffe	5.95	Moose	4.95
Hippo	5.95	Zebra	4.95
Panda	5.95	Front:	
Rhino	5.95	Cheetah	4.25
Complete set	60.65		



WHAT IS IT?
This fun activity helps develop visual closure skills. 15 drawings show only half of each object including two different kinds of halves—top or bottom and right or left. Make two sets—a horizontal halves set and a lateral halves set. 30 sturdy illustrations for 15 appealing objects. A colorful storage basket and a container with lid are also included. $28.95



TODDLER PICTURE AND OBJECT MATCH
First children match ten pairs of adorable objects. Then the children match the objects to silhouettes, and finally to outlines. Pictures are printed on sturdy boards. A colored basket for storage is included. $30.95

Time-Tested Toddler Tasks Order Form (Please Print)

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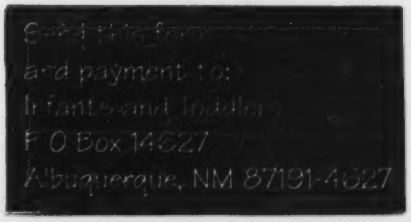
School _____

Address _____

_____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____



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$50.00-$299.99 . . . . . 10%

Sub-Total	
Tax (NM only)	
Shipping	
GRAND TOTAL	

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LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

continued from page 12

accept the child's interest or disinterest. Trust that the children are absorbing the activities around them. Some toddlers begin to point spontaneously to letters on signs, for example, and say, "There is an **m**."

The variety of language activities children experience also depends on the maturation of the child's nervous system. One day everything comes together and children experience a real explosion into language expression and maybe even reading.

These emotional learning experiences happen when a child is exposed to a rich language environment. These are not systematically taught. Direct teaching robs the child of personal creative experience.

Freedom to Choose

Sometimes when I talk with a toddler teacher, I ask, "What you do for language development?" The teacher often responds, "Everything is language." And that's true. "We sing and we tell them the names of the objects on puzzles." And that's good, but it's also important to have pictures of objects, or vocabulary cards, as we traditionally call them, available for the children to choose themselves.

In the toddler room, the children should have the opportunity to decide when they want language. You should have both objects and picture sets. If you just say everything in the environment is language, then the child must wait for the adults to give them that information.

Conclusion

Montessori education has often been criticized as placing too much emphasis on academic learning. Some critics question the appropriateness of the Montessori approach. I find it difficult to understand these criticisms when we are concerned about the decline in the ability of children to read, write, and express themselves. Today we have important research that supports Montessori's discovery of the sensitive periods for language development.

How can we deny providing these wonderful experiences which enable the child to learn joyfully and easily during these special times. We should not hesitate to give the young child this gift which lasts a lifetime.

is widely recognized as one of the leaders in the field of Infant and Toddler education. She founded one of the first Montessori programs in the country, at the Gloria Dei School, Dayton, OH following her AMI/AMS preprimary training in 196[illegible].

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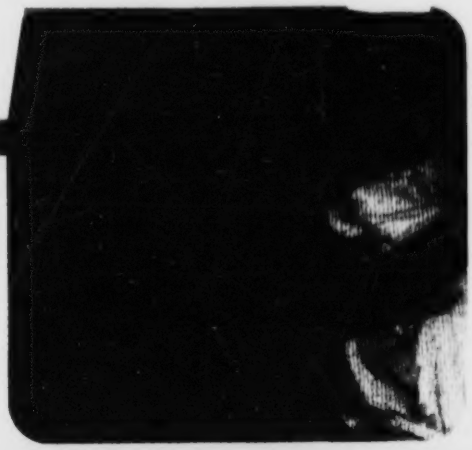

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At what point do you think a child is ready to move from the infant room to the toddler room?

When is the child ready to move from the toddler room to the three-to-six program?

Editor: Lillian DeVault Kroenke

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Editorial

Sharing Our Knowledge

Jack Blessington, once Headmaster of the Whitby School in Greenwich, CT, recently offered some perspective on our role as Montessorians in our culture.

With some slight editing to clarify, Jack observed, "To run a Montessori program, we have to admit to differences (in theory and practice) and then do something about it. We cannot run our schools except that we run them for everybody. We cannot run Montessori schools for children. That is way too narrow a perspective.

"Many of our schools are little islands of this difference in a community and yet we don't go into the community to offer Montessori for people who don't have the money to come to our schools. The truth is—if we think this is penicillin, if we think this is insulin, if we think this oxygen—then we have to share it. If we don't, we are wrong.

"I have seen a generation and a half of Montessori children. There is no significant difference between them (and children from other programs) when it comes to being citizens and living in this world if we have not affected their primary culture—the home."

Peggy Loeffler admonishes us that if we are to be more effective at home and in our culture, we also have to translate our language into more common vocabulary usage.

A toddler teacher reported that, after delivering a talk to parents, several parents came up to her asking what they could read to learn more about their young children. Reflecting on this request, the only Montessori-based resource that came to mind was this journal, Infants and Toddlers.

We are here focused to help you share our collective Montessori knowledge and experience—with your staff, parents, your community—everybody.

The number of bulk mail school subscriptions has doubled in our second year. Is it time for you to consider the cost-effective bulk mail subscription option for your school?

Lillian DeVault Kroenke

Ask Ginny...

by Ginny Varga

Q When is the child ready to move from the infant room to the toddler room?

A Many things contribute to that decision. First of all, observation of the child's coordination is important. The degree of independence the child has achieved is another. For example, can the child fairly adequately feed himself with a spoon?

It also depends on the environment the child will move into. Are most of the children in the toddler room much older? Does that environment fit the child? Are the materials in the toddler room going to match the child's interests and abilities?

The child's emotional confidence—the way the child adapts to new situations is related to the degree of independence.

Q When is the child ready to move from the toddler room to the three-to-six program?

A Avoid keeping children too long in the toddler classroom. This often happens. Teachers often say, "I don't think they're ready. They won't be able to cope." Much of this is simply the toddler teacher's attachment to a child and feeling that the child can't quite do all the things in the three-to-six environment. Sometimes toddler teachers don't want to let go. They may feel that a child is their helper or their leader in the class.

If a child is three or over, and even if you feel the child is emotionally young, move him or her on. Don't worry whether the three-to-six teachers are going to have problems. That's their problem. We don't have to take care of the three-to-six teachers. They may think the child is never ready.

The behavior of the three-year-old in the toddler class affects all the other behaviors. I like to move these young three-year-olds out because generally, as they get close to three, they are no longer interested in the environment no matter how hard you try.

You keep thinking, "What can I put in the environment for these children." I say "Nothing." Sure, you should try to find materials that interests them, but the fact is they really need to be with older children. I would just say, " Move them on. Move them on."

Very often the three-year-old children who are upsetting your routines, the very next day as they enter the three-to-six class, make a real transformation.

For future issues, please direct your questions to:

Ask Ginny...

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First Observe
Meeting the Needs of Children from Birth to 3

By Susan Tracy

Observation is my method.
I will not teach it to you.
You will struggle to learn it.

Maria Montessori
From a 1912 speech

Observation is the foundation of the Montessori method. Maria Montessori herself developed materials and her approach through her observations of children. Her ideas about education were revolutionary because she had the courage to observe what was really happening with children rather than going along with the dominant theories of her time.

My mentors, Carolina Gomez del Valle and Sonja Koenig, were insistent that I observe. Most of what I share in this article I credit to them.

As Montessorians, we continue Montessori's tradition of observation. I work with both parents and educators encouraging them to begin observing. Often, adults want a simple answer, a recipe. Sometimes I could give it and sometimes I do.

But I would rather turn the adult toward the child.

First Observe

We must observe a child before we know how to respond. Sometimes when we observe, we're able to stop ourselves from intervening or interacting in a way that wouldn't really be helpful at that moment. Often we are ready to jump in and help. But, if we pause long enough, we see that children are successful on their own.

Observation is our true education. We must do a lot of observation early in our careers. In a Montessori teacher education course, the classroom materials are presented and the theory is given, but these serve only as an introduction. Our real education is found in observing the children every day. We must continue to refine the materials and interpret the Montessori approach to meet the needs of each child.

My first two years in Montessori were spent sitting along the classroom wall, writing down whatever the children were doing. I was not allowed to intervene. Hundreds of times I wanted to, but instead I saw the child discover a solution. The look of satisfaction would not have been present on the child's face if I had helped. I began to see children as capable—and they were discovering themselves to be capable. I developed tremendous trust and a sense of peace—things really do work out.

By the way, the children I observed in these first two years were all under 18 months of age.

First, observe . . . because it is of primary importance. I believe that we must develop our skills in observation if we are to use the Montessori method. Otherwise we are responding mindlessly to children, not mindfully. It must be an ongoing part of our growth and self-development.

Observation, in the scientific sense, is the act of taking notice of particular phenomena as they occur in the course of nature. We select one portion of reality, at a particular moment, to record. An effort must be made not to change the reality that has been observed in the recording through preconceptions, judgments or evaluations.

We are observing something in nature—the young child. Children are close to a natural state because they are new to this world. They are just discovering the world. Gradually, a person is corrupted by society. A baby could care less what anybody thinks about what he's doing. He is pure in action, pure in response. We are observing the natural behavior of the child.

Many adults find it difficult to spend time with infants and toddlers. I think it is because these young children are so very different from us. Most adults have had little experience with children, as families get smaller and relatives more distant. Infants and toddlers have unconscious absorbent minds, driving their little bodies to observe, imitate and explore. They have no concern for our adult priorities. If I can get adults—parents or educators—to stop their adult activities and thoughts for a while

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FIRST OBSERVE

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and just observe, they discover this special, different being.

It is particularly important to observe infants and toddlers because they cannot communicate much to us verbally.

Write It Down

When we must observe a child, it is valuable to write down observations. If we take notes daily in the classroom, the result can be a detailed record of the children's behavior in that environment. You will use these notes in future months and years.

Writing down your observation forces you to find the words to describe what is happening. Events become clearer to us when we put words to the experience. Describe the child's behavior as precisely as possible. Do they grasp puzzle pieces with the whole hand or do they use a pincer grasp to hold the knob? How many seconds do they stand without holding onto furniture? What sounds do they produce and in what situation?

We are studying babies and we must be as accurate as possible. It is not possible to be completely accurate in the present, but it is impossible when observations are recorded after the fact, hour or days later. The children are capable enough that we do not need to serve them constantly. We can sit down to take notes. That is how we see their capabilities! And they become more capable when we get out of their way.

When we observe, we usually pick a focus in advance. Think about your environment and the questions you want answered. Perhaps observe a material, an area of development such as language, movement, or relations to others.

Only through observation of a child can we truly know his and her needs, and therefore, what materials to place within the environment to aid development.

One role of the adult is to prepare an environment for children. We need to know how to set up an environment for children, at home or in the classroom.

The Infant-Toddler Montessori course is just the beginning of your education. We also need to know, in a particular moment, what to provide to each child right now. Observation is critical. I don't believe we can meet the child's needs without observing. When we don't meet their needs, we are actually causing problems for the child.

Only through observation do we develop in ourselves an objective and non-directive attitude in our relationship with the child.

We are often more comfortable with a directive attitude. Traditionally, adults like to direct children. We think we are in control. The beautiful experience with infants and toddlers is that we are so clearly NOT in control. Control is an illusion. Some things are out of our control. And that is very clear with the young child.

We influence, we prepare the environment, we respond. But we do not control. I see adults struggle with this. I have seen myself struggle with this. I see adults with their hands on children, moving their smaller hands or bodies. We don't have that control.

What we see is that the young child imitates us, so we model, present materials (in a more relaxed manner for the child under 2.5) and we know that we are always, always an example to those beings around us.

If we develop a discipline of sitting down, taking observation notes, and getting out of the way, we receive a gift. That gift is trust in the children, and beyond that, trust in nature and all beings. Paradoxically, we also receive another gift—trust from the children.

We see mistakes, messes and disagreements. We also see corrections, resolutions and growth that would not happen if the adult had either prevented the mistake or corrected it, rescuing the child.

Parents who learn to observe in a parent-infant program develop trust in their child and the knowledge of the vast capability of this little, new human being. How many people miss this completely? Think how this early relationship of trust rather than worry will affect the child. Think of the life-long impact if the most

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Parent-Infant Program Guidelines for Observation

The Parent-Infant class is a place for both children and adults to learn. Children learn by exploring the environment; adults learn through observation.

Observation, in the scientific sense, is the act of taking notice of particular phenomena as they occur in the course of nature. We select one portion of reality, at a particular moment, to record. An effort needs to be made not to change the reality of what has been observed in the recording through preconceptions, judgments or evaluations.

Only through observation of a child can we truly know his or her needs, and therefore, what materials to place within the environment to aid development.

Through observation we develop in ourselves an objective and non-directive attitude in our relationship with the child.

Through observation we will develop a non-judgmental attitude, and therefore, a respectful attitude toward the child, others and ourselves.

Through observation we develop in ourselves the capacity for silence and going within, which results in an attitude of respect and concentration while indirectly promoting the same attitude in the child.

Susan Tracy

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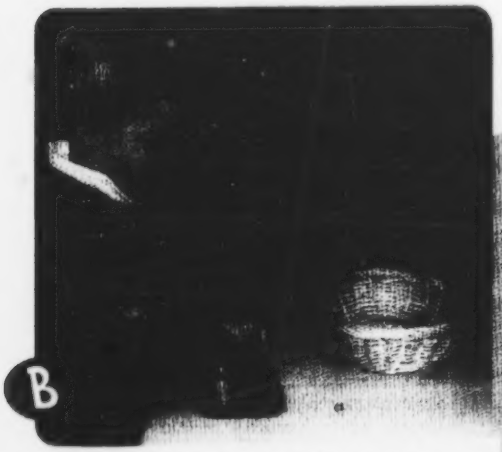
One Fine Morning...

a picture story

by Lillian DeVault Kroenke

This is our classroom. There are so many things to do that are just right for us.



Even when we are just starting in the toddler class, there are many interesting things we can do all by ourselves.

We especially like the counting rings.

It's time to call home again.

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Photographs by Lillian DeVault Kroenke were taken of Rosalinda Turner's toddler class at The Montessori School of Hinsdale, Illinois.

We match the sea animals and learn their names.

We match the geometric shapes and learn their names.

We roll our rugs carefully.

Sometimes we practice walking around the rugs carefully with our teacher.

We put our rugs away.

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One Fine Morning

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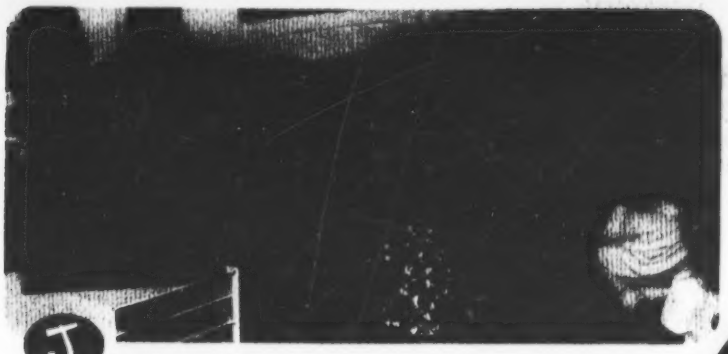
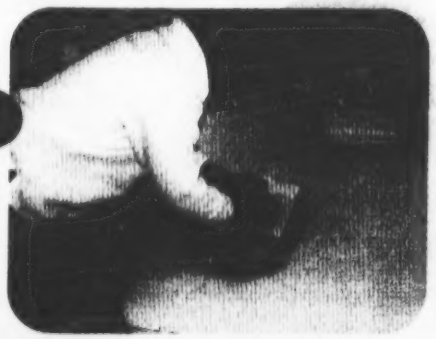
Silence Game
Sunbeams are falling...
Sunbeams are falling...
Falling to the ground
And they don't make a sound.

(Change according to the weather:
snowflakes, raindrops...)



J We like to sing songs and play a silence game.

L We enjoy eating our snack together.

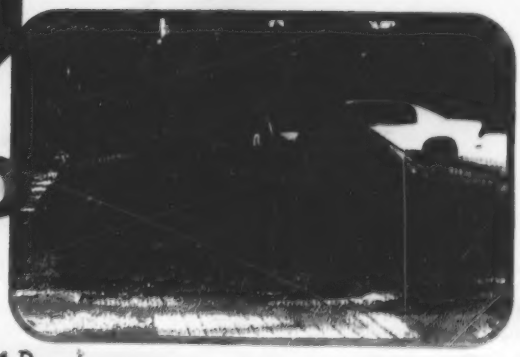


K We help prepare the tables for our snack.

Giving Thanks
We give thanks.
We give thanks.
We give thanks
For the sun today.

M We like to play outside. We climb and slide.

N We like to hoe and dig.



O Mom's here. It's time to go home.

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On All Fours

By Grazia Honegger Fresco
Translated by Rita Messineo

Which animal first moves on all fours, then on two and finally, on three?

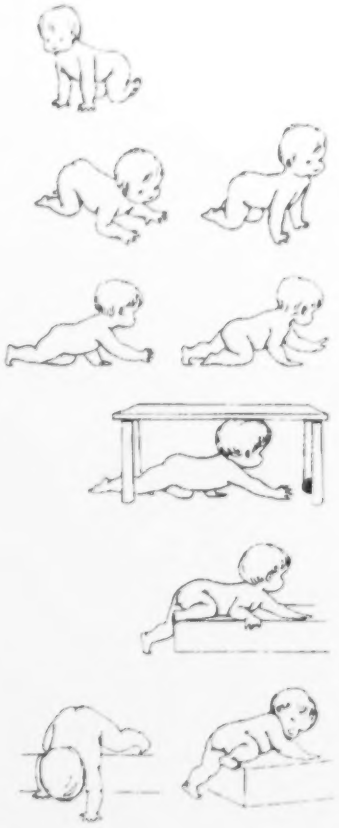
This is the puzzle that the Sphinx put to Oedipus according to a very ancient Greek legend. Oedipus resolved it—the mythical animal is the human being who moves from crawling to the upright position by lifting himself from all four limbs and later, in his old age, needs a support in order to move without staggering. To the eyes of the ancients, this child, who begins to move around the environment by himself, is worthy of special consideration.

The novelty of movement begins at the time when the child starts to separate from the mother, around eight months. He still does not know how to stand on two legs, but he manages. He moves however he can, dragging himself on a thigh, pushing himself with his feet or a bent leg, and, more often, like a cat or a bear on knees and hands. This new ability marks the conclusion of a second very important phase of development—exogestation.

The infant passed the endogestation stage inside the mother's body during the nine months from conception to birth. Then he passes through another nine months outside of the mother's body, although with a strong dependency from her, her milk, her arms and her voice.

Exogestation ends precisely when the child starts to move actively away from the mother and to express his own demands with sounds, or with repeated syllables, which are the outline of true and real words. When the child starts crawling, he seems overwhelmed by a totally new energy.

His feet are no longer closed like a ball. They are stretched out becoming a means to move around and to support him. The fingers of his hands and the toes of his feet explore surfaces, with all their tactile sensitivity. Those small feet should be kept bare as much as possible, at the most covered with anti-slip socks. For certain, they should not be confined in hard shoes if the child is to put himself to the test.



Crawling enables the child to explore the environment directly at his own height. Before crawling, he saw the environment from a still position or from the adult's arms only. Moving around on his knees, he learns how to overcome obstacles such as a small step and how to creep into openings to hide.

He discovers that objects that roll out of sight can be seen again by looking under the furniture. He begins to learn about difficulties and dangers. Even here, progress is more or less slow and according to each child. The important thing is that learning will be in the child's own time. When he stands on his feet, the infant will know how to put to use the knowledge that he has acquired. He will move around with remarkable confidence if no one urges him or puts him on his feet before his time.

If you would like to expand your knowledge on these subjects, or the great importance of fostering a harmonious and serene growth, you may consult the following references:

1. Emmi Pikler, il quaderno Montessori, No 40, page 87, illustrated by Klare Papp.

2. The concepts of endogestation and exogestation are explained in the book, Touching: The Human Significance of the Skin by Ashley Montegue, Harper Collins, 1986.

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FIRST OBSERVE

continued from page 6

important person in his world thinks the child **is capable**, rather than helpless and empty.

With trust, we begin to see that there is a plan within each child, a plan for becoming a human being. It is not a conscious plan, but a life force that drives the children to complete themselves, to learn what they need to learn. The plan within each child is better than any plan we could think of. If we think we are in control, and we try to force our plan on a child, it will likely be nothing like the child's own plan. It is better to observe how the life force is expressed in this being, and respond to it.

Only through observation will we develop a non-judgmental attitude, and therefore, a respectful attitude toward the child, others, and ourselves.

I'm sure that we all judge children and their behavior—good, bad, naughty, smart, mean, right or wrong. The question is not whether the behavior is good or bad, but is it helpful or useful for that child and the family or community? It is one thing to label behaviors out loud or in our minds, beyond that we also label children. They live up to our labels: the bully, the victim, the good girl, and the bad boy . . .

We also judge parents. I hear firsthand judgments about parents who work too much, who aren't married, who aren't raising their kids the way we think they should . . . When we judge someone else, that person knows it at some level.

It damages the relationship. They may withdraw from your program. They may not cooperate with you. They may agree with you that they are a bad parent and act from that definition of themselves.

We are hardest on ourselves.
I observe that children do the best they can, that they always have a reason for what they do, even if the adults around them don't perceive it. When I accept the children as they are today, I have to accept other adults and myself. We all have reasons for what we do. We are all doing the best we can. A very helpful lesson!

Only through observation will we develop in ourselves the capacity for silence and going within, which results in an attitude of respect and concentration while indirectly promoting the same attitude in the child.

To be able to truly observe, we have to be in the present moment, watching what is happening in front of us. That is not possible if we are thinking about what we're going to do next, or what happened to us that morning. Quiet your mind and your body, free yourself to observe.

Adults today, in this society, have to create the opportunity for silence if they want it to be a part of their lives. Most of us lose touch with our need for silence. It becomes very difficult to stop our adult thoughts, our urgent to-do lists in our heads, and just be present with a child. We think that the children need us and that we can't take time to sit down to observe.

I give educators the opportunity to sit for a little while each day to observe the children. In my parent-infant program, I give parents the opportunity to sit, focus on their own child during class time and take observation notes. Some adults take advantage of these precious opportunities. Some do not. Some cannot. These adults are too out of touch with their ability to quiet themselves. They will not reap the benefits of observation.

I was not naturally calm. It is a skill that I learned. I believe that everyone can learn to become calm.

> " . . .this calmness is usually considered to be one of character, a lack of nervousness. But there is here a question of a deeper calm, an empty, or better, unencumbered state that is the source of inner clarity. This calm consists of a spiritual humility and intellectual purity necessary for the understanding of a child . . .
>
> Maria Montessori
> The Secret of Childhood

We cannot expect the children to be normalized, concentrated, focused and calm if we are not.

I once got a fortune cookie that said, "One cannot hurry with dignity." As a parent or educator of young children, we sometimes feel that we need to be in three places at once. Someone is spilling over here and someone is hitting over there when you would like to show a child a material. You feel so needed.

When you discover that things work out and children can learn to solve problems themselves, you will realize that there will be a moment for you to give whatever little help would benefit the child. You do not need to be everywhere at once. When this time comes, you will be comfortable to sit down with your notebook and observe. Until you are **really** needed, sit down with your notebook each day, observe and **be comfortable.**

I know that this is difficult! Practice silence for yourself every day. Practice away from children so you know the feeling. Then you can re-create it when you are with children. There are many traditions of silence and contemplation, such as prayer

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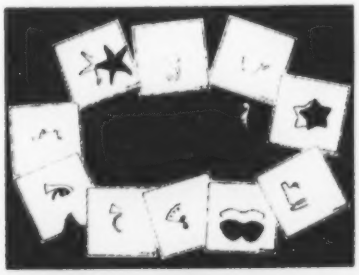

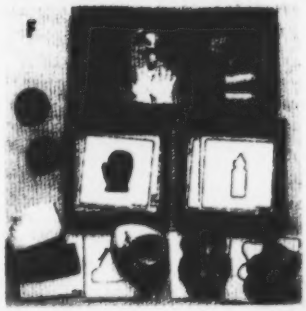

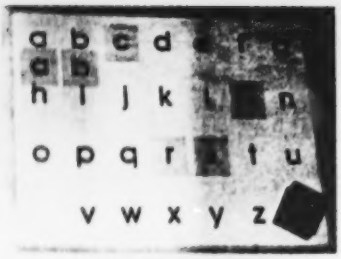

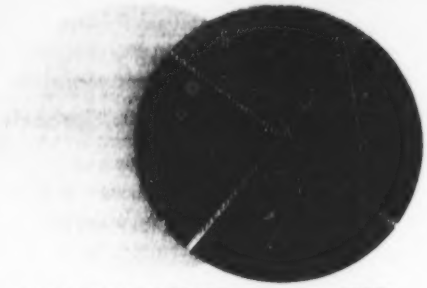

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FIRST OBSERVE

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and meditation. For some, going for a walk or spending time in nature will help. Relaxation exercises can be a place to start. I went through childbirth using these techniques and felt no pain. I now teach these techniques to pregnant mothers.

There are levels of observation that have been identified. We advance through these levels as we gain skill observing; focusing on the children and on what is really happening in front of us.

The most basic level is **seeing**—simply using your eyes. The next level is **looking**—directing the eyes toward something. Beyond seeing is **watching**—following the subject of your observation with your eyes. The next level is observation—all of the above, done with purpose.

The highest level is **contemplation**. At this level, we are one with our subject. When we are completely focused on a child, we may have the feeling that we are the child—we understand what he is trying to do, that we are in that body moving in that way. We are completely in touch with that child, even though he may be unaware that we are observing.

It is a great help to the relationship between parent and child if this connection can be formed early on. Many factors in our society prevent this bond. I encourage it by teaching parents to observe.

In my experience, to be able to identify closely with another person, at the level of contemplation, is to have **compassion** for that person. It doesn't happen often, but it is a connection that we can make. When we have compassion for another human being, then we can understand their needs more completely, and respond to those needs. This is a true relationship of love.

Sometimes the loving response is not easy or obvious. Sometimes it is to believe in that person and get out of their way. Love helps us realize our true role. We facilitate the growth of another human being.

Susan Tracy, M.Ed. is an educator of children, parents and teachers. She is advisor to the Infant-Toddler Teacher Preparation Course at MECA-Seton. Susan holds a Bachelors Degree in psychology from Northwestern University and a Masters Degree in Education from Loyola College in Baltimore. She has Infant-Toddler certificates from both the American Montessori Society and the Association Montessori Internationale. However, she insists that her true education has come from observing children.

Susan and her husband, Jim, are expecting their fourth child this spring.

Susan recently founded a parent education center, Learning Together, in the Chicago area. The center offers parenting classes, a parent-infant program and prenatal classes, all based on the Montessori approach. She may be reached at (847) 540-5004.

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Editorial

Below the Surface

Most adults know a little something about many subjects, but most of us do not know many subjects in depth.

We can only be experts in a few areas. We depend on knowledgeable, educated and trained professionals in each field to know their areas of expertise. We count on them to help us when we need it and to provide the technology, information or skill needed to maintain and advance our culture and society.

So it is with working with children—our field of expertise. Almost everyone, although perhaps daunted at first, thinks they know about babies and what they need.

Most adults have at least a general awareness. Some of us even make it our business to provide basic child care as our livelihood. All babies and toddlers need food, shelter, clothing, diapering, bathing, sleep, a safe environment, human contact and love.

Few adults, however, have expert, in-depth knowledge beyond this obvious surface level of child care. That is exactly why Montessori is so unique and valuable. We are not just warehousing children to provide a service or to make a living. With Dr. Montessori's insights and our own observational skills, we reach for a deeper understanding of the nature of the child.

We understand the importance of nurturing the intrinsic unfolding of the individual child. We know that each child absorbs, implements and extends the nature of the culture into which he or she is born.

We also understand that the child has the potential to extend and change the quality of human life and experience.

Few adults understand the magnitude of the power and force lying within each child—or within themselves. We are privileged to access that insight and awareness.

We are the experts who can assist other adults in their understanding of the wonder in our midst. We are also privileged to have the opportunity to share the awe and respect we hold for the child.

Lillian DeVault Kroenke

Ask Ginny...

by Ginny Varga

Q Are there any particular approaches to working with aggressive children?

A First of all, we have to emphasize prevention. I have had experience with children that seem to be hurting a lot of other children.

Recently in a toddler class, the teacher reported to me that a new boy gouged one child's face. To solve her problem, she told him to sit on a bench. This is a common solution.

When a child is new, the child has to feel safe. This child obviously did not feel safe. When a child is fearful in a new situation, you have to protect the child. You have to give the child the feeling that you will not let anyone hurt him.

Observe the child you consider to be aggressive. Think of him as a scared child, a child who doesn't feel safe. If he doesn't feel safe, he is likely to lash out at anyone who comes near him. Keep that fearful child near you. Do things with him and protect him. The best thing you can do is to do everything you can to help him feel safe.

Sometimes it may mean saying to the child, "You can be my friend. You can stay with me. I will not let anyone hurt you." When the child feels that there is someone that he can relate to, that he is protected, the aggressive behavior may disappear. Of course, that's not the complete answer.

When you see the offending child only as an aggressive child, you just want him to go away. If you think of an aggressive child as a frightened child, however, what does that do to you personally? Does it change your feeling and attitude toward that child? Yes! Now you have a different feeling. You begin to look at the child in a different way. You see a child you want to protect and nurture.

When you bring in a new group of children, it is reasonable that some children may not feel safe in a new environment. It is important that you nurture a feeling of protection and safety. Once that is accomplished, you can begin to let children have more time to solve their own individual problems.

Finally, it's important to know the stages of child development as well as Montessori theory and practice. Then you can reflect on what's happening and feel confident about your expectations and how you are reacting to aggressive children.

For future issues, please direct your questions to:

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The Toddler: A Child in Transition

By Virginia Varga

Usually, the young child is experiencing several transitions at the same time. Although we as adults may think of the toddler period as being a joyful time, it isn't always joyful for every child.

The First Critical Transition

The very first and most important transition that the child has to make at the age of 18 months to 3 years is the process of moving from the experience of that very, very close attachment with the mother. As Kaplan says in her book, *Oneness and Separateness*, "The child is moving from that experience of the pleasure of oneness to individuation or to developing a sense of the self as separate from the mother." (Kaplan, 1980)

The parent is having the same feelings. The mother, in one moment, experiences the pleasure of oneness with her child—that bonding sensation. In the next moment, the child moves away to do something very independently, and she is proud that her child is growing.

In the next moment, she may feel very sad that she is losing her baby. And so we say that this important transition creates emotions of anger and grief. This is common. The mother feels the anger and grief and so does the child.

The Wonderful Twos

The toddler very often says no, taking that oppositional stance that is often called "the terrible twos." When you understand what the toddler is going through, we have to call this period "the wonderful twos" because the child is approaching what is called psychological birth. Now is the time when children are continually becoming more aware that they are persons, persons that are not connected to the mother. This is a huge step toward autonomy and independence.

A Human Experience

This period is extremely important because we never quite outlive it. At different times in our life, we revisit the same feelings of growing independence and yet have the knowledge that we are dependent on a number of people. This process continues through life. It probably peaks again around adolescence and we talk about adolescents behaving very much like two-year olds. They also take an oppositional stance to test once again their own autonomy and their own independence.

When you understand what the toddlere is going through, we have to call this period "the wonderful twos" because the child is approaching what is called psychological birth.

Developing Independence

The development of independence is the core of Montessori philosophy. If you're going to support normal development, you must know what is normal development. Maria Montessori's definition of normal development is being able to develop the competency to do things for oneself no matter how small.

If we want to talk about supporting independence, theoretically, we would let the baby open its mouth and seek the nipple instead of putting the nipple into its mouth. The child can participate from the very beginning. This supports the natural ability of the child that reinforces independence, and a feeling of competency that helps children reach their human potential.

Making a Life Critical Decision

There are many tiny little steps that support the child's growing sense of separateness, especially as the child becomes mobile and begins to move away. It begins as the children bump into tables and go through small areas like crawling tunnels, where they have the tactile stimulation of the boundaries of objects. They experience having boundaries for the first time .

It is very easy for babies to attach to you physically because they don't have a sense of boundaries. When you hold them, you become one. Physically, it feels as if you are one person.

Making a Life Critical Decision

As the child moves about farther away, into another room, for example, the child slowly experiences physical separateness. We say

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psychologically that this awareness peaks at 18 months to 3 years. Children are taking the oppositional stance, which is critical for their development. That is how they test whether it's okay for them to think and solve problems, rather than have their parents do all the thinking and problem solving for them.

What is particularly important is how the parent or you as the caregiver—but mostly the parent—responds to the child's no's or negativism. The child needs to experience that "I can think differently and take an oppositional stance and I will still be loved and protected." This critical decision may be made even at this early stage.

Experiencing Separateness

It is important for toddlers to experience limits. If they do not, it is difficult for them to experience themselves as separate, thinking persons. This transition is one that causes disequilibrium for the child. Children continue to test their separateness, primarily with the parent or the primary caregiver. Usually, they will not test as much with a caregiver in a child care center or school.

Nevertheless, a common word expressed by toddlers is "No," and that's an okay word. If you are caring for toddlers, you should not get upset or react strongly to the child's no's. If you don't hear some no's, you might even wonder if everything is okay. No is a very common word in this period.

We want toddlers to make the decision to think and solve problems. Therefore, it's important that we support the child's ability to think.

Experiencing Limits

Experiencing limits is a very important early transition. This is the time when many children, with the proper developmental support and responses, decide to become a thinking person or to let other people think and solve their problems. If you're working with toddlers, it is very important to understand this and to give this information to parents.

We want toddlers to make the decision to think and solve problems. Therefore, it's important that we support the child's ability to think. Sometimes when it's appropriate, when i see a toddler really persisting in solving a problem, I say, "I like the way you think." Don't overdo it because then it's meaningless. But I guess it's true—I do like the way they think. We know that toddlers are learning the names of everything. This acknowledgement label's for them what is going on in their heads or in their activities.

What Is Thinking?

After all, what is thinking? Did you ever tell a five or six-year-old to memorize something and try to explain to them what it means to memorize? I have and it's fun. For the toddlers, this is the same thing—you are labeling what the child experiences as thinking. It's a good idea to be aware of the process.

Sometimes I kid and say, "Where are those nice passive children of thirty-five years ago, especially those good little girls that do what other people tell them." I say this kiddingly because most children have more permission to think and be assertive today. That's healthy even though it was easier for the adults to teach children who just did what they asked them to do and didn't particularly think or take an oppositional stance.

Moving from the Unconscious Absorbent Mind

Another transition that we experience with toddlers is the movement from the stage of the unconscious to the conscious absorbent mind. In any classroom some children are in the unconscious absorbent mind. Others are approaching the conscious absorbent mind and some already have the conscious absorbent mind.

Very often in a nine-month program, when the toddlers are all under two or two and a half years, they are all in the unconscious absorbent mind. Then during the year, children move to the conscious absorbent mind as they become more aware, more conscious.

Initially, one has to answer questions and deal with situations requiring decisions based on when the individual child is in transition. It is important to have a set of expectations and be able to accept certain behaviors of the children in the unconscious absorbent mind. Other expectations are appropriate for children who have moved into the conscious absorbent mind.

...the young child basically attends to everything. Everything attracts the child's attention so the child does not remain focused very often, especially when there are a large number of objects in a room.

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How many of you have seen the unconscious mind? Once I observed toddlers with adult students. We were in another room looking through an observation window. I said, "There's a typical behavior of the unconscious absorbent mind."

Someone, who had been in Montessori for a long time but had not worked with very young children, said, " I didn't know you could see it." She had read in a book, the theory that the young child has an absorbent mind, that the first stage is the unconscious absorbent mind and then the next stage is the conscious absorbent mind. But she hadn't made the connection to the practical application of the theory.

The Unconscious Absorbent Mind in Action

Sometimes, I demonstrate the typical behavior of children in the unconscious absorbent mind without talking. They just wander about, finding something, moving from one thing to another. They just go. In a few minutes they can trash a whole room.

Child development books say that the young child has a very short attention span. I think the young child basically attends to everything. Everything attracts the child's attention so the child does not remain focused very often, especially when there are a large number of objects in a room. The more stimulation, the more the child goes from one form of stimulation to another, from one sight or sound to another, continually moving about.

Putting Things Away

You may ask, "At what age can you expect these children to put things back?" It's very difficult to get a child in the unconscious absorbent mind to put things back in their places before they take something else out. The Montessori rule is that children may only take things from a shelf and then must return them to the shelf. For the child in the unconscious mind, this is a very difficult concept to internalize. However, that doesn't mean they shouldn't learn to put things back.

We should have appropriate expectations in relationship, not so much to the child's age, but to the stage of the development of the conscious mind.

We should have appropriate expectations in relationship, not so much to the child's age, but to the stage of the development of the conscious mind. Often a young child will go up to another child's activity which the first child has left, move in and perform the activity. You ask, "Where is the cycle of work when neither child puts the materials back on the shelf?"

One child may be putting some pegs in a board. Sometimes, another child will pick up the pegs, joining the activity and the first child doesn't care. It's as if the first child isn't even aware that somebody has taken over the work. Sometimes we feel it's important to admonish the child, "Tell him that this is your work." I'm not sure that's necessary. At this stage of the unconscious absorbent mind, children don't have a very strong sense of where their bodies end and where some other person's body begins.

They can move in on one another, do the same thing and move out. Very often they don't care or are not even aware that the activity is someone else's work. Yet the child is absorbing everything that is going on in the environment. It's very important for the caregivers or teachers of toddlers to be aware that their movements and behavior are also absorbed by these children.

Mastering Adult Movement

One of most important skills that every adult working with children this age needs to master is a very simple skill. It's important that all the adults in the room, the teachers and their assistants, carry only one item at a time with two hands. Sometimes we tell our assistants what to do, but we don't do these things ourselves.

When you carry one little thing at a time with two hands, you'll find that your whole movement slows down. It's almost like a ballet. It's beautiful. It's simply different than grabbing something in one hand and something in another and striding across the room.

Formal Presentations

Everything that you do is a presentation. So many people ask, "When do you do formal presentations?" Or, "Do you even do formal presentations with toddlers?" My answer is always, "No, we don't do formal presentations—as they are done in a 3-to-6 class."

We have to define what we mean by a formal presentation? There is a formal presentation when you sit down, usually with a new activity, and expect the child or children to sit, maybe with their hands in their laps, to watch until you complete the activity. Then you expect them to repeat the activity as you showed them so you can see if they have understood the presentation. That is traditionally what we expect in the three-to-six class. And it works.

Three-to-six children have sequential memory. Many of these children don't sit very well, even then, but they learn. They are trained to sit and watch. They learn our expectations. Some children just naturally can sit and watch.

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Presentations for Toddlers

But we shouldn't expect the same kind of attention and control from toddlers. I want you to realize that everything you do in the classroom is a formal presentation. Children in the unconscious absorbent mind are taking everything in. You can't fool them. You can't say one thing and then do another. If you understand that every movement that you make is a formal presentation, you will take greater care in your movements.

Consider what happens when you have an activity with some sequential steps. Be ready to assist the child. When an activity is finished, you may put it back on the shelf. Then wait and observe until someone goes to the shelf to take the activity or shows interest. Follow the child, if she takes the material to a table—or if you don't literally follow the child, follow with your eyes—and wait.

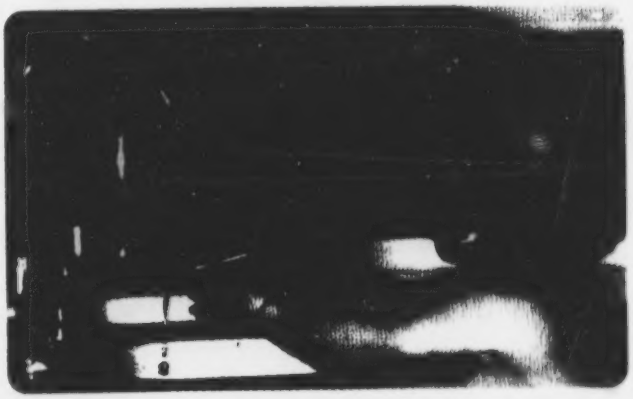
Getting the Message Across

If there is a message in the structure of the activity, the child may not need any help. Let the child figure it out. If there are some sequences involved, move to the child and be ready to help. Any step the child can't do, you do. The child does the next step and so on. Toddlers can do almost everything because whatever little thing they can't do, you help them do it.

There isn't much the toddlers can't do. This means that your environment can be quite complicated. In fact, if you try to make the activities so simple that children can always do them by themselves, they'll be climbing the walls very shortly. These little toddlers love challenge. They love hard work, not easy things. Some things are very simple and the child will know exactly what to do. However, there are more complex activities, like those with sequential steps, when the child will need your help. Don't make your environment too simple. We tend to do that.

Moving into the Conscious Absorbent Mind

At some point, children begin to have the experience of making conscious choices. They will pass up some things and go for a specific object or activity. When you see this happening, the child is moving from the unconscious absorbent mind into the stage of the conscious absorbent mind. In the unconscious absorbent mind, I often say that it looks as if the objects choose the child. In the conscious absorbent mind, it becomes more obvious that



the child chooses the object or activity.

Objects have a function to call out to the child and almost demand that they use that particular object. For example, I have a very interesting little video vignette of a child doing hand washing. We put hand washing in the toddler room on the table, just as we do in the three-to-six class, as a separate activity even if there is a low sink where they can wash their hands.

There are many steps involved in fetching water in a pitcher and, when they're finished, pouring water into a bucket to empty it. These steps help children extend their sequential memory. Furthermore, there is more ritual than just turning on a faucet, sticking hands under the water and drying them.

In the video sequence, every time the child walked near and saw the pitcher, her hand would reach out to take it and she would go get water to pour into the bowl to start hand washing.

In the process, she forgot that she had left the bucket that she had previously emptied over at the sink. She left to do something else. All of a sudden, she walked by the bucket

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Fostering Hope

By Martha Werner

MARTHA WERNER,

mother of Naomi Marie, is currently an intern in the CMTE/NY Infant and Toddler Program, Michigan.

Dr. Montessori identified the development of the intellect as a critical component early in her work with children. This perception has been validated by the recent studies of brain development in the first years of life. Unlike most other early childhood programs, the Montessori Method introduced an extensive variety of academic materials, centering many activities around the intellectual needs of children.

As we study the young child, we debate and research how children learn, what they need to know and how best to teach and encourage them to reach their potential. This is appropriate even if our only concern is education. In some settings, children's needs for physical care, emotional security and social interaction are presumed to be met in the home within the family.

Meeting All the Child's Needs

In earlier days of Montessori programs, because of the time limitations each day, our interactions with children were centered primarily around intellectual concerns and not on other needs.

Today, greater numbers of children are spending more time away from home at school or in daycare. Children as young as six weeks may be spending as much as twelve hours a day away from their mothers and families. As we practice our philosophy, we can no longer focus only on intellectual pursuits. We must clearly address other needs of children.

We accept the idea that all children have different intellectual capabilities that need to be addressed individually if each child is to reach his or her own potential. Now, we see more clearly that the same is true of children's spirits and emotional capabilities.

Meeting Individual Needs

Each child reveals different tolerances and weaknesses and different strengths and talents. One child may be able to separate quickly from his parents while another clings anxiously. One child may trust that all will go well while another may be fearful of injury and loss, needing more reassurance. As child care providers, we need to accept these differences and respond to each child's individual emotional capabilities.

We accept the idea that all children have different intellectual capabilities that need to be addressed individually if each child is to reach his or her own potential. Now, we see more clearly that the same is true of children's spirits and emotional capabilities.

I suggest that we become conscious of the fact that the foundation of our philosophy includes meeting children's emotional needs. Consistent and conscious awareness of all of children's needs fosters hope. Without hope, all our other efforts will not satisfy a child's needs.

In Maslow's hierarchy of needs, self-actualization is the summit of the pyramid, but physical and emotional security are at the base. Schools cannot meet the intellectual needs for many children until these more basic needs are met.

Establishing an Adult World View

Our efforts must be directed to the establishment of a hopeful world view. We must not come to the child recklessly with our unconscious and personal world view. The cynic may say that when we provide for a child's emotional needs and, thereby, foster hope, we are painting a romantic picture of the world and creating a child who will not be prepared for the real world.

We must ask some basic questions. Do we really want to prepare children and prepare them for the world in its present state? Or should we rather call them to be members of a gentler society that they will play a role in creating?

Creating Hopeful Expectations

I want children's expectations of the world to guide them to create a hopeful world. I want to help empower children, not disillusion them. It is commonly thought that our expectations influence our experience; we create what we expect. I want children to hold the following hopeful expectations:

- They can meet the challenges set before them creatively
- There will always be help when it is really needed, even when they must wait.
- They will be believed and trusted

We want all children to leave our care not only capable and retaining

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a certain amount of information and skills, but also hopeful and empowered. Hope is the key element. Hope sees through calamity and gives one strength to persevere when all is dark and treacherous.

The View Without Hope

Unfortunately, many children live in environments that teach them that:

- They are not able to meet challenges.
- When they need it most, there will be no help, no matter what they do.
- No one believes or trusts them.

These children learn despair, an extremely frightening foundation and viewpoint. Despair does not breed independence. Rather it breeds apathy and inactivity.

Supporting a Hopeful World View

Because we work with very young children who are still operating on a largely unconscious level, we have the power to influence their unconscious responses to the world. We are part of a small circle of interactions from which children will draw their view of the world and their own place and worth in that reality. We are also influential models for their future adult selves. The care we provide now will influence the future care of children.

Even though at present, many do not value the role of caregivers, we do have an awesome responsibility. We must be aware, therefore, of what we are modeling by examining are own inner attitudes, feelings and thoughts. We must watch our interactions with children, taking care that we convey the appropriate messages.

The Traditional World View

Traditional pedagogy has focused on creating children who fit into the world—trying to force them to be what many of us thought they were not inherently: friendly, respectful, unselfish and inquisitive. This approach undermines the adult's trust in the child's innate goodness.

More importantly, it tells children that they are not accepted as they are, that they will not be accepted unless they hold themselves in a certain configuration. Their self-worth is constantly held in balance. Children must know that above all, they are accepted and welcomed as they are.

Changing Our Interaction

Permission to exist underlies all other expectations about the world and the child's part in it. It is, therefore, the most essential part of the child's hope. Instead of focusing on changing children, let us convey a certain view of the world by changing how we interact with them and by opening ourselves to meet their emotional needs.

Building a New Home Base

Children need a relational and environmental home base. We must build a trusting relationship between ourselves as the caregivers and the children, providing security in the absence of parents, providing an environmental stability in the absence of the home and establishing a secure home base before striving for higher goals. We must each feel secure before facing the unknown.

By the time we become adults, our home base is our own inner sense of trust in ourselves and the world that we establish through our lifetime of experiences.

For children, this home base is much more concrete. The children leave their parent(s) at the door and go to work with the teacher, talk with her or sit in her lap. As caregivers, we must strive to be available to children. We must be enough aware of our own needs so that these do not prevent us from providing for their needs. Daily journaling and an honest examination of our expectations and feelings can bring our own needs to our awareness.

Encouraging Independence and Self-Reliance

We must create an environment to encourage independence and self-reliance on a child's own efforts and creativity. It requires self-control to restrain ourselves when children are solving problems in a way we would not have tried; or when we have an opportunity to demonstrate our superior knowledge and skills instead of allowing their strengths to be displayed.

It takes humility to help children who really need it rather than allowing them to flounder in frustration and prove their own helplessness. It is difficult to lend without usury and more difficult still to give and ask nothing in return.

Understanding the Child's Communication

A critical part of security is knowing that we are able to communicate with those who care for us. We need to know that we will be believed and trusted. We must, therefore, be slow to label a child's communication manipulative, untrue or exaggerated. We must remind ourselves that children communicate in the way they see things. This gives us insight into their spirits.

We can successfully provide for a child's other physical and emotional needs by establishing a trusting home-based relationship with the child's caregiver. If the caregiver

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communicates honestly and provides opportunities for the child to be successful, then this last need—to know that even if he must wait, his needs will be met—is provided.

Building a Trusting Relationship

Maria Montessori called this trusting relationship ***confident expectation.*** We direct our efforts to assisting in the building of a child's competence as a means to fostering the hope that is so essential to both the child's present and future life.

In our classrooms, it is difficult to meet all needs immediately, so children must wait. This encourages them to find new ways to cope with their problems and feelings or it causes them to despair that their needs will not be met.

We need to be sensitive to the fact that for the young child, waiting is a strain. We need to acknowledge children's efforts frequently, expressing in a concrete way when they can expect that their needs will be met. We can say, "I know you are waiting. After I wash my hands and dry them, I can help you." or "You can get the material out first. I will come as soon as I..."

The youngest infants also may benefit from this acknowledgement communication. In this way, we remain available to meet children's needs and encourage them to maintain a hopeful outlook.

We must continue to evaluate new aspects of our role as caregivers and to remain conscious that our practices must support children's emotional needs as we assist them in their effort to sustain hope.

Maria Montessori's Rules

Listed below are Dr. Montessori's rules for the treatment of the child by the adult as they are found in ***Around the Child,*** an Indian Montessori publication.

1. Never touch the child unless invited by him in some form or other.
2. Never speak ill of the child in his presence or in his absence.
3. Concentrate on developing and strengthening what is good in him.
4. Take meticulous and constant care of the environment. Teach the proper use of things and show the place where they are kept.
5. The adult must always be ready to answer the call of the child who stands in need of him and always listen and respond to the child who appeals to him.
6. The adult is to be active when helping the child establish a relationship with the environment, and remain outwardly passive, but inwardly active when this relationship has been established.
7. The adult must respect the child who makes a mistake without correcting directly. But he must stop any misuses of the environment and any action which endangers the child or the other members of the community.
8. The adult must respect the child who takes rest or watches others working and not disturb him, neither call him nor force him to other forms of activity.
9. The adult must help those who are in search of activity without finding it.
10. The adult must, therefore, be untiring in repeating presentations** to the child who refused them earlier, in teaching the child who has not yet learned, in helping the child who needs it, to overcome imperfections in animating the environment, with her care, with purposive silence, with mild words, with loving presence. She must make her presence felt to the child who searches and hide from the child who has found.
11. The adult must always treat the child with the best of good manners and in general offer him the best she has in herself and at her disposal.

**Editors Note: It is important to realize that everything we do and say, every movement, every word we speak and our behavior toward any person are formal presentations to infants and toddlers. Their unconscious absorbent minds capture and internalize everything in their environment.

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THE TODDLER: A CHILD IN TRANSITION

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and the bucket said, "Take me to the hand washing." As a result, she couldn't stop washing her hands. You'll see this with many toddlers. Sometimes they start an activity and they can't stop.

In our classroom we have a wooden box with a ball. That particular item was actually designed by a Montessorian in Italy many years ago. We use it in both the infant's room and the toddler room. This activity is attractive to toddlers somewhere around 10 months when the child has the hand-eye coordination to reach for target and also the ability to let go. The ball goes in and the ball rolls out, making a sound against the box. The activity calls the child to repeat the action. Sometimes the toddler looks up as if to say, "Help me! I can't stop."

This is something I've also seen many times with other activities. Just about the time toddlers have put something together and are getting ready to get up, they look at the activity and begin to take it apart again. That's an interesting and unique characteristic of toddlers.

As the teacher, you should be observant and know when you should go to help a child finish because they can't stop by themselves. Pick the material up and say, "Put this back." Sometimes we have to make a decision about how to help a child end an activity.

When toddlers move from the unconscious absorbent mind to the conscious absorbent mind, you can see that they can pass up various activities, make choices and carry through.

Deciding When to Intervene

The decision of whether to intervene or when to intervene in a toddler's activity should be determined by whether the child is in the unconscious absorbent mind or the conscious absorbent mind.

When children are new to the group or in the unconscious absorbent mind, one should intervene much more quickly. I think you should always prevent hostile or dangerous actions, especially when a child is new to the class.

First of all, children have to feel safe in your environment. That's a number one concern before you let them solve their own problems. You should initially intervene much more at first so the children feel safe, before they get punched, hit or knocked down. If they become upset or cry, they are not going to want to come back.

Cause and Effect

Another thing toddlers love is cause and effect. They love it! That's how they make sense of their world. The young child experiments in the environment with cause and effect. That's why you put little plugs in your electrical outlets. Experimenting with those outlets could be very unsafe.

Infants and toddlers like to flick the lights. If you hold them up, babies like to turn the lights on and off. It's cause and effect. They're addicted to it. As they move to materials and hands-on activities, they check out cause and effect with responses from both children and adults. So very often, if they do something and you correct them, they repeat the action again and again.

This is a story I've told many times so some of you may have heard it. Many years ago after a parent program, one of the parents came forward. He told us that that his son had climbed up on a coffee table. He slapped his son's hand, said no and put him down. The child climbed up on the table again, he slapped his hand, said no and lifted him down again.

The parent reported that the child repeated the process forty-five times and the father slapped his hands each time. He assured us that he didn't hit them hard and asked the other parents, "Do you think my child is retarded?" One of the parents answered, "No, but I think you are."

That is a great story. The father continued to slap the child even though it had no effect on the child's behavior because he didn't understand cause and effect. For the child, the process begins to be predictable. He thinks, "Oh, if I climb up here again, my father will slap my hands. I feel good about that. I knew what would happen and it did." That's not punishment. They love cause and effect. That is a characteristic of toddlers.

For example, one child may squeal or squeak or yell when somebody grabs his or her work. There are some children who when they think, "Hmm, what shall I do?" notice the child who squeals and go over to grab his or her work just because they know the other child will squeal. It's no different than turning the lights on and off. It's predictable.

Very often, the child who bites, bites the same child. This is very upsetting for the parents. Then, one day you see the child who is bitten go over to the biter and put out his arm, offering to be bit.

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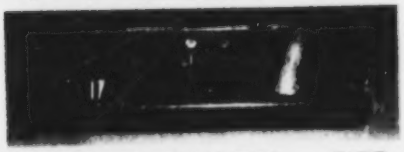
Time-Tested Toddler Tasks



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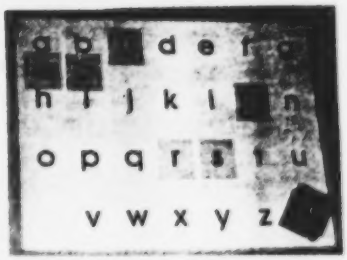

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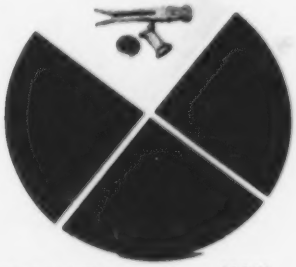

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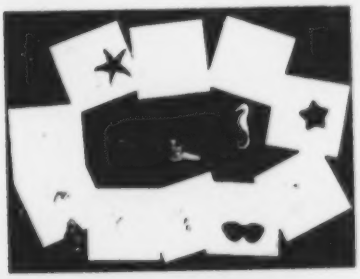

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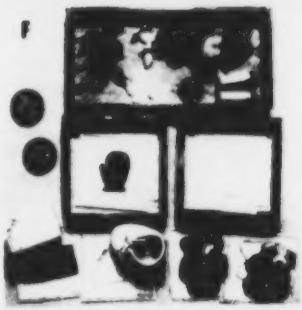

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THE TODDLER: A CHILD IN TRANSITION

continued from page 12

Ginny Varga... is widely recognized as one of the leaders in the field of Infant and Toddler education. She founded one of the first Montessori programs in the country at the Gloria Dei School, Dayton, OH following her AMI/AMS preprimary training in 1961.

Preventing Negative Patterns

How do you stop this pattern? Toddlers get into these repetitive, predictable patterns very easily. Because they are predictable, the children feel very good about them. Toddlers understand that there is consistency in life and these people are predictable. If you step back, doing nothing, when a negative pattern starts, that unacceptable behavior will break out all over your classroom. There is the point when you have to intervene to prevent some of these patterns of cause and effect from getting started. You can't afford to sit back and ignore them.

These children, who have only been on the earth for eighteen months, maybe twenty months, need modeling. They need help. They need to learn how to solve problems a little bit at a time through an adult's facilitating, not just abandoning them too long and letting them figure it out on their own.

Again, the child can experience your place as unsafe or unprotected. This is particularly true for the period of the unconscious absorbent mind and conscious absorbent mind. If I were talking about three to six-year-olds, I might talk completely differently.

You always have to think about the stage of the child's development. Some of the things you need to do with infants might not be healthy for toddlers. Conversely, it would also be unhealthy to apply to infants the same strategies or interactions used with toddlers.

Kaplan L, *Oneness and Separateness*, Simon & Schuster, 1980.

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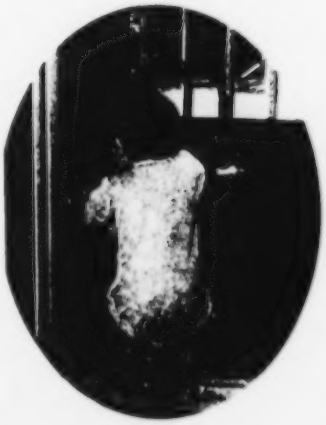

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